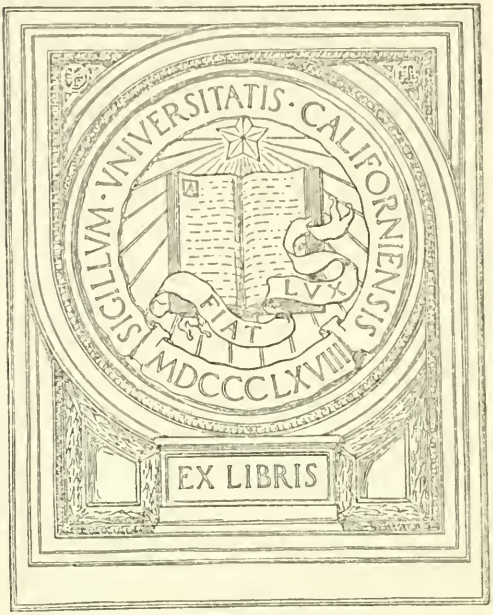
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

PLAYER, PLAYMAKER, AND POET

By H. C. BEECHING

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



THE GIFT OF
MAY TREAT MORRISON
IN MEMORY OF
ALEXANDER F MORRISON

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/williamshakespea00beec

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

PLAYER, PLAYMAKER, AND POET

THE

SHAKESPEARE PROBLEM RESTATED

By G. G. GREENWOOD, M.P.

In re SHAKESPEARE.
BEECHING v. GREENWOOD

A rejoinder on behalf of the defendant

By G. G. GREENWOOD, M.P.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

PLAYER, PLAYMAKER, AND POET

A REPLY TO MR. GEORGE GREENWOOD, M.P.

BY

H. C. BEECHING, D.LITT.

CANON OF WESTMINSTER

PREACHER TO THE HONOURABLE SOCIETY OF LINCOLN'S INN

WITH FACSIMILES OF THE FIVE AUTHENTIC SIGNATURES OF THE POET

NEW YORK

JOHN LANE COMPANY

MCMIX

2939
1339w

To

CECIL HENRY RUSSELL, ESQUIRE,

Treasurer of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn.

GIFT OF MRS. A. F. MORRISON MAR 27 '43

MY DEAR TREASURER,—One reason for asking your patronage of this little book is that I may have the pleasure of recording my thanks for many acts of kindness, both from yourself and from other members of your worshipful bench, since I was admitted to serve the Society in the first month of the new century; not the least of them being my recent election for a second term of office as Preacher. But a further reason more closely concerns the pamphlet itself; which is an attempt to meet the latest statement by a lawyer, Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., of the Middle Temple, of a curious paradox which seems to have a special fascination for legal minds; I mean, the opinion originated by a Miss Delia Bacon in America, and since imported into this country, that "Shakespeare's" works were written by the great Lord Chancellor, her namesake.

434572

When, as Chaplain of the Inn, I was honoured with a seat at the barristers' mess, this topic came up frequently for discussion; and I should admit that as a recreation at dinner, and as a trial of wits, the theme was excellent, for it is always a good exercise to discover and test the grounds of a traditional belief. But the heresy, if I may call it so, which at the outset numbered but a few fanatical adherents, has of late made many converts among members of your profession; and one or two distinguished Judges, both in England and America, have written books upon it. To their surprise and chagrin, as I am told, very little notice was taken of them; the reason, of course, being that most persons who have enough capacity to discuss the question at all, judge it as a question, not of evidence, but of the literary palate. If anyone can believe that the same vineyard produced "King Lear" and "The Advancement of Learning," he must believe it; there is nothing more to be said. But the latest defender of the paradox has restricted himself to a denial of the Shakespearian authorship, without asserting the Baconian—that is to say, he has changed the *venue* of the matter from the court of literature to that of history. In five hundred large octavo pages he has set out "some of the evidence and the arguments" which in his judgment "make in favour of the negative proposition."

Now while the negative proposition seems to me, on the merits, an equally impossible contention with the other, it is nevertheless an arguable one; and as

I found that certain opinions of mine were quoted by Mr. Greenwood with a measure of approval, I determined to argue it; not, I confess, in the expectation of converting Mr. Greenwood, for he safeguards himself by saying that the "evidence and arguments" for his case "might be extended almost *ad infinitum*"—and indeed the Baconian faith peeps out in not a few places from under his cloak of agnosticism—but for the sake of those members of the Bar who have an interest in the question without being committed to an answer, and who can see when evidence is not to the point, and when an argument has been fairly met. Having, therefore, an invitation to give a lecture before the Royal Society of Literature, I devoted it to an examination of Mr. Greenwood's case, so far as it is contained in his book, with what result will appear in the following pages. But in order to show more clearly what positive evidence there is for the traditional view, I have revised and reprinted two lectures given at the Royal Institution, which endeavour to set out the facts of the Player's life as simply as possible, and to show the congruity of what is recorded of his character with the impression made upon our minds by the dramas themselves.

I remember that Ben Jonson dedicated one of his plays to the Inns of Court as being the noblest nurseries of "humanity" in the Kingdom, and the best judge of humane studies. They are not less so to-day, and therefore it is that I take the liberty of

appealing to them, through you, for a judgment on this issue.

I have the honour to be, my dear Treasurer, your most obliged and humble servant,

H. C. BEECHING.

LINCOLN'S INN : *November* 1908.

Note.

In the first lecture, for the sake of brevity, I have had to put the section headings, which express Mr. Greenwood's contentions, into my own words. They can be verified from the remarkably full index to his volume. I am indebted to my friend Mr. Sidney Lee for permission to use the facsimiles of signatures made for his *Life of Shakespeare.*

LIST OF FACSIMILE SIGNATURES

SHAKESPEARE'S AUTOGRAPH SIGNATURE APPENDED TO THE PURCHASE-DEED OF A HOUSE IN BLACKFRIARS ON MARCH 10, 1613 . . . . *facing p.* 20

Reproduced from the original document now preserved in the Guildhall Library, London.

SHAKESPEARE'S AUTOGRAPH SIGNATURE APPENDED TO A DEED MORTGAGING HIS HOUSE IN BLACKFRIARS ON MARCH 11, 1613 . . . . ,, 20

Reproduced from the original document now preserved in the British Museum.

THREE AUTOGRAPH SIGNATURES SEVERALLY WRITTEN BY SHAKESPEARE ON THE THREE SHEETS OF HIS WILL ON MARCH 25, 1616 . . . . ,, 75

Reproduced from the original document now at Somerset House London.

I

Mr. GREENWOOD'S CASE EXAMINED

I HAVE met so many people, especially members of the Bar, who have told me that Mr. Greenwood's re-statement of what he calls "the Shakespeare problem" deserves and awaits an answer, that, having the opportunity of addressing this Society on a literary question, I thought it might be profitable to see what exactly the problem is of which Mr. Greenwood speaks, and whether it is to be solved as Mr. Greenwood solves it. The problem is, in Mr. Greenwood's words, this: "Was Shakspere the player identical with Shakespeare the poet?" (p. xxii). Mr. Greenwood is careful to guard himself against being supposed to ask whether Francis Bacon wrote the Shakespearian plays and poems, for that is a literary question on which men of letters would be entitled to the last word. If, for example, a claim were made that Bacon was the writer of the prose passages in the plays of Shakespeare, it would be no difficult task to examine the development of the prose style in the one case and in the other, and see whether they corresponded, for I do not think it could be argued that the same writer could develop

two distinct prose styles in two different ways. But Mr. Greenwood, as I said, leaving aside literary considerations, confines himself to the question upon which he ought to be as competent to form an opinion as any man, and more competent than many, because of his legal training—the question whether there is evidence that the player of Stratford and the poet of Parnassus were the same person. I must admit that Mr. Greenwood employs in his task some professional talents which are more appropriate to the advocate than the judge. Indeed, his book appears to be addressed to those twelve men in the box, the Palladium of our liberties, whose conspicuous merit it is that they bring to the decision of the questions of fact submitted to them a completely open mind; for we have, in these five hundred pages, finished examples of most of the arts, from browbeating to persiflage, from innuendo to declamation, which make up much of the equipment of the successful practitioner at the Old Bailey. Anyone who has heard the cross-examination of medical experts in a murder case will have an exact analogue of the way in which Mr. Greenwood handles, for example, Mr. Sidney Lee or the late Professor Churton Collins. By any and every means they must be made to seem ridiculous. If they agree, it is a conspiracy of fools; if they differ upon any point, however unimportant to the question at issue;—"You see for yourselves, gentlemen of the jury, the value of expert evidence"! I propose to leave on one side this very large portion

of Mr. Greenwood's book which, he would admit, cannot be called evidence; and to devote this paper to disengaging, so far as I can, and answering, as briefly as possible, the actual arguments which he puts forward.

There are, however, two forensic artifices, as I must call them, of which particular notice must be taken, because they are likely to mislead. The first is the suggestion of hidden meanings in quite simple expressions and commonplace uses; an effective practice, of which the classical instances are the "chops and tomata sauce" and "warming-pan" of Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz. I will give an example of considerable importance for the Baconian case, if not for Mr. Greenwood's.

Ben Jonson was present at the celebration of Bacon's sixtieth birthday, and wrote an Ode, which opens thus:—

> "Hail, happy genius of this ancient pile!
> How comes it all things so about thee smile,
> The fire, the wine, the men; and in the midst
> Thou standst as though some mystery thou didst?"

Mystery, says Mr. Greenwood! "What was the mystery which was being performed? The Baconians assert that here is an allusion to the secret Shakespearian authorship—a secret known to Jonson, and which he hoped might soon be published to the world. The Stratfordians, of course, reject this interpretation with scorn, but they are unable to give any plausible explanation of Jonson's meaning, and

the mystery remains a mystery still" (page 490). Well, why should "Stratfordians" invent explanations for what Jonson himself explains in the next line?

> "Pardon, *I read it in thy face*, the day
> For whose returns, and many, all these pray:
> And so do I. This is the sixtieth year," &c.

Jonson is addressing not Bacon but the Genius of the house, whom he sees celebrating the "mystery" of Bacon's sixtieth birthday; and to the happy rite he joins his own prayers. That is all. As a classical scholar, Mr. Greenwood is not ignorant that "to do a mystery" (*mysteria facere*) means only to perform religious rites, and conveys no hint of any "mystery" in the vulgar sense of the word.

The other artifice which Mr. Greenwood himself allows me to call forensic (p. 1) is "bluff"; and it is curious to discover that the very keystone of Mr. Greenwood's elaborate piece of architecture is nothing better—I mean his assumption that the difference between two spellings of Shakespeare's name is significant. Throughout his book he distinguishes "Shakspere" the player from "Shake-speare" the poet; as though this assignment of the two spellings were not, as it is, a mere fancy of his own, but clear on the face of the documents, and indisputable. There is, in fact, not a tittle of evidence to support it. To begin with, the presumption is wholly against it, because the spelling of surnames in the seventeenth century was even more inconsistent than that of ordinary words. Sir Walter

Ralegh, for example, is known to have spelt his signature in five different ways—Rauley, Rawleyghe, Rauleigh, Raleghe, Ralegh.[1] And the actual evidence that in Shakespeare's case the variation in spelling is equally meaningless can be given very shortly, and is conclusive. It falls into two parts—evidence of the inconsistent use of both spellings, and evidence of the use of the spelling *Shakespeare* in reference to the Stratford player.

1. *The inconsistency.* There are two drafts of the grant of coat-armour (1596, 1599); the spelling in the former is *Shakespeare*, in the latter *Shakespere.* In the proceedings of the Stratford Courts of Record the spelling is interchangeably *Shackspeare* and *Shackspere*, and in the litigation about the Asbies estate, *Shackespere* and *Shakespeare.* Of printed books bearing the author's name, while the first two publications—the poems (1593-4)—use the form *Shakespeare*, the third, a quarto of "Love's Labour's Lost" (1598), uses *Shakespere*; and two reprinted quartos of the same year the form *Shake-speare.*

2. *The use of the form "Shakespeare" in reference to the Stratford player.* This spelling is found in the list of actors attached to Ben Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour" in the folio of 1616 [in "Sejanus" it is Shake-speare]; and also in that prefixed to Shakespeare's own Folio. The same spelling is used in the reference to the player in the accounts of the Treasurer of the chamber in 1594 (see page 59).

[1] Stebbing's *Life*, p. 31.

It is used in the documents connected with the purchase both of the Blackfriars estate, and New Place.[1]

3. Mr. Greenwood lays great stress on the hyphen which appears occasionally between the two syllables of the name *Shake-speare* as strong corroborative evidence that that form of the spelling was appropriated by some poet unknown as a "*nom de plume*." I have pointed out above that the full spelling, with the hyphen, is used of the actor in "Sejanus." But that no importance can be attached to the hyphen is decisively shown by a comparison between the title-pages of the two quartos of "Hamlet." The hyphen is found on the title-page of the pirated "Hamlet" of 1603, and disappears from the title-page of the authentic quarto of the year following. Moreover, it is used in one of the commendatory poems prefixed to the First Folio, but not by Ben Jonson, who (on Mr. Greenwood's hypothesis) would have understood its significance.

The evidence, therefore, of any definite intention behind the inconsistent spellings of the name *Shakspere* or *Shakespeare*, or *Shake-speare*, is altogether absent; and the elaborate pains that Mr. Greenwood takes all through his book to distinguish "Shakspere"

[1] A word may be added as to the player's own use. In the extant signatures he does not use an *e* in the first syllable; in the two of 1613 the last syllable is contracted by the exigencies of space; but on the will the final signature is unmistakably "speare," and I have Dr. E. J. L. Scott's authority for saying that the second also has the *a*; the first is too much faded for certainty. See facsimiles, pp. 20, 75.

the player from "Shakespeare" the poet, is, to use his own term, nothing but "a form of bluff." I have dwelt on this point at length because, as will be seen, Mr. Greenwood calls this suggestion of a pseudonym to his aid as a *deus ex machina* when sober reasoning fails.

To come now to the arguments employed to show that the Stratford player could not have written the Shakespearian plays and poems. I will take them one by one, and treat them as briefly as possible.

1. *The town of Stratford was insanitary.* It is difficult to believe that this objection is meant to be taken seriously. "We are accustomed," says Mr. Greenwood, "to think of Stratford as a delightful haunt of rural peace, 'meet nurse for a poetic child'; and fancy pictures have been drawn of a dreamy romantic boy wandering by the pellucid stream of the Avon, and communing with nature in a populous solitude of bees and birds. Far different was the real historical Stratford. A dirty squalid place," &c. (p. 4). It would be a fair reply to this, that if there were no drains in Stratford, the Avon was the more likely to be "pellucid"; and as Stratford was a small town, and William Shakespeare had legs, he may have been able occasionally to escape from the smell of muck-heaps, supposing them to be prejudicial to the development of literary power. But Mr. Greenwood assumes that point: and until he proves it, no more need be said about Stratford.

2. *William Shakespeare's father could not write his name.* Here there is a conflict of evidence. Mr. Lee prints in the illustrated edition of his "Life" a facsimile of John Shakespeare's autograph. But, assuming Mr. Greenwood to be right, I would point out that there is no evidence that Marlowe's father could write his name; and yet Mr. Greenwood does not follow Mrs. Gallup in disputing the authenticity of his plays. No argument can run from John Shakespeare's illiteracy to his son's. He was a self-made man, who served in turn every office in his municipality; and no men are so conscious of their defects in education, or so anxious to secure for their children the advantages they have not themselves enjoyed.

3. *There is no evidence that William Shakespeare ever went to the Stratford Grammar School.* True, there is no recorded list of scholars. But as the school was free to all burgesses, why of all the boys in the town should the eldest son of the chief alderman have been withheld from the privilege of attending it? It must be accepted that he went to school, unless a presumption can be shown against it. There is such a presumption, replies Mr. Greenwood. "He never in all his (supposed) writings makes mention of the Stratford school or of its master" (p. 47).[1] I remember no reference to their schools

[1] I have looked in vain for any reference of the sort in Mr. Greenwood's pages. To defend my own identity, may I say how much I owe of my love of Shakespeare to Dr. Abbott's lessons at the City of London School.

or schoolmasters in the works of any contemporary dramatists except Jonson and Drayton. Of Drayton I shall have a word to say presently. Jonson wrote an ode to Camden, his master at Westminster; and the sufficient explanation of such an unusual celebration is that he was Camden. Spenser, Kyd, and Lodge were at Merchant Taylors' School, but they are silent, even about Mulcaster. Even Herrick, who with his innumerable odes to everybody might have been expected to remember his pedagogue, has not done so, with the result that all the ancient schools in London can claim him as a pupil. It cannot be allowed, then, that there is any such presumption against Shakespeare's schooling as Mr. Greenwood contends for.

4. *Supposing Shakespeare went to the Stratford school, why should we assume that the school taught the ordinary grammar-school curriculum?* The answer is, that it must be presumed unless evidence can be shown against it. And all the evidence is in its favour. We know that Latin was taught in the school a few years before, from letters preserved from Abraham Sturley to Richard Quiney, both Stratford burgesses. In these letters, says Malone, "are intermixed long Latin paragraphs": and he prints one wholly in Latin, besides another, also in Latin, to Quiney from his son while in the school.[1] Latin therefore was taught at Stratford. That being so, the Latin books read could hardly have been other than

[1] Malone, ii. 105–6.

the usual text books, of which the Shakespearian plays give evidence (p. 42). We find a list of them in a description of his education given by another Warwickshire "butcher's son" (as Aubrey calls him) who became a poet, Michael Drayton. In a delightful passage of Drayton's letter "to my most dearly-loved friend Henry Reynolds, esquire," he writes as follows :—

> "For from my cradle you must know that I
> Was still inclined to noble poesy ;
> And when that once *Pueriles* I had read,
> And newly had my *Cato* construed,
> In my small self I greatly wondered then,
> Amongst all other, what strange kind of men
> These poets were, and pleased with the name
> To my mild Tutor merrily I came,
> (For I was then a proper goodly page
> Much like a pigmy, scarce ten years of age)
> Clasping my slender arms about his thigh,—
> 'O my dear master, cannot you,' quoth I,
> 'Make me a poet? Do it, if you can,
> And you shall see, I'll quickly be a man.'
> Who me thus answer'd smiling : 'Nay,' quoth he,
> 'If you'll not play the wag, but I may see
> You ply your learning, I will shortly read
> Some poets to you.' Phœbus be my speed,
> To 't hard went I ; when shortly he began,
> And first read to me honest *Mantuan*
> Then *Virgil*s *Eglogues*. Being entered thus
> Methought I straight had mounted Pegasus,
> And in his full career could make him stop,
> And bound upon Parnassus' bi-clift top."

If Drayton worked hard at his Latin poetry, and his unknown master encouraged and helped him, why is it straining probability to suppose that it was so with Shakespeare ?

5. *But Shakespeare did not stay long enough at school to acquire as much Latin as the writer of the plays shows evidence of possessing.* It is Rowe, in his "Life," who preserves the tradition, which came through Betterton from Stratford, that "the narrowness of his father's circumstances, and the want of his assistance at home, forced him to withdraw his son from school." The father's fortunes had begun to fail when William was thirteen; but as there were no school fees to pay, we need not assume that he was withdrawn as early as this. Still, even if he were, a clever boy—as tradition affirms that Shakespeare was,[1] who had spent four years in learning Latin, and nothing but Latin, and who had been taken through the poets usually read in grammar schools, Mantuanus, Ovid, Plautus, and parts of Virgil—would have acquired a good stock of Latin reading, which, if he had inclination, he could afterwards improve. And tradition, coming through Aubrey from

[1] Mr. Greenwood is very sarcastic with the "Stratfordians," as he calls the greater part of the civilised world, for accepting or rejecting the traditions about Shakespeare "at their own sweet fancy." I suppose everybody weighs each tradition separately according to its source, if this is known; if not, according to its congruity with ascertained facts. In regard to the traditions recorded by Aubrey, for example, peculiar importance attaches to those which would have come to him from Beeston the actor. There is one of Aubrey's traditions (which I do not remember to have seen quoted in Mr. Greenwood's pages) to the effect that William Shakespeare was a remarkably clever boy. "There was at that time another butcher's son in this town, that was held *not at all inferior to him for a natural wit*, his acquaintance and coetanean, but died young." The traditions are best studied in Halliwell-Phillipps's *Life of Shakespeare*, ii. 69–76, where they are collected.

Beeston the actor, says of Shakespeare, that "though, as Ben Jonson says of him, he had but 'small Latin and less Greek,'[1] he understood Latin pretty well."

What, then, is the knowledge of Latin required by the Shakespearian plays and poems? Ovid's "Fasti" was used for the "Rape of Lucrece"; Plautus's "Menæchmi" and "Amphitruo" for "The Comedy of Errors"; and Ovid's "Metamorphoses," along with Golding's translation, for "The Tempest." (In the case of Plautus there was a translation available in manuscript and probably an old play to work upon. *Lee*, p. 54.) Besides these general debts there are one or two other passages, such as Portia's speech on Mercy, which come immediately, or through some other author, from the classics. Professor Churton Collins, I know, went further than this, and endeavoured to show that Shakespeare had read the "Ajax" of Sophocles and other Greek plays and poems. But Mr. Collins was a man of vast memory, and parallel passages were his foible. At the same time, he pointed out that there was no Greek classic, of which he seemed to trace a recollection in Shake-

[1] In weighing Jonson's *dictum*, we must remember Jonson's standard of scholarship. In illustration of this, I may quote a passage from Selden's *Titles of Honour*: "I went for this purpose [to consult the scholiasts on Euripides' *Orestes*] to see it in the well-furnished library of my beloved friend, that singular poet Master Ben Jonson, whose special worth in literature, accurate judgment and performance, known only to that few which are truly able to know him, hath had from me, ever since I began to learn, an increasing admiration." (Symonds' *Life of Jonson*, p. 164.)

speare's writings, which was not accessible in a Latin version: so that if some of the parallels he adduced should be considered too close for coincidence, there is no reason to regard them as beyond the scope of William Shakespeare of Stratford, educated as we know him to have been educated.

6. *But, allowing that an industrious boy could get a knowledge of Latin at Stratford, he would learn nothing else.* "All unprejudiced men," says Mr. Greenwood, "must recognise that the idea of Shakspere coming a raw provincial from Stratford to London, adopting the player's profession after many shifts and vicissitudes, and thereupon writing such a drama as 'Love's Labour's Lost,' and such a poem as 'Venus and Adonis,' is, to say the least of it, wildly improbable" (p. 109). When speaking of "Love's Labour's Lost" we must not forget that we have not before us the first draft of that play. Shakespeare came to London, probably, in 1585, "Venus and Adonis" was published in 1593, and the quarto of "Love's Labour's Lost," *corrected and augmented*, appeared in 1598. We have, by a happy accident, a good measure of the extent of these "corrections," for the first draft of the final speech of Rosalind to Biron, in v. 2, 851, has by the printer's carelessness been left in the play earlier in the scene (lines 827–832); and a comparison between the two versions enables us to guess how very much of what we think the peculiar beauty of the play was due to its revision.

This is the earlier version :—

Biron. And what to me, my love? and what to me?
Ros. You must be purged too, your sins are rack'd,
You are attaint with faults and perjury:
Therefore if you my favour mean to get,
A twelvemonth shall you spend, and never rest,
But seek the weary beds of people sick.

"Corrected and augmented" this becomes :—

Biron. Studies my lady? Mistress, look on me;
Behold the window of mine heart, mine eye,
What humble suit attends thy answer there:
Impose some service on me for thy love.
Ros. Oft have I heard of you, my lord Biron,
Before I saw you; and the world's large tongue
Proclaims you for a man replete with mocks,
Full of comparisons and wounding flouts,
Which you on all estates will execute
That lie within the mercy of your wit.
To weed this wormwood from your fruitful brain
And therewithal to win me, if you please,
Without the which I am not to be won,
You shall this twelvemonth term from day to day
Visit the speechless sick and still converse
With groaning wretches; and your task shall be
With all the fierce endeavour of your wit
To enforce the pained impotent to smile.

More interesting still is it to observe that the best part of Biron's speech in iv. 3, 290 is an insertion, lines 302–5 occurring again fifty lines lower down.

Let us, then, state the problem, in regard to these earlier plays, a little less rhetorically than Mr. Greenwood does, and with a closer eye to dates. Shakespeare is last heard of at Stratford in 1585, and reappears in company with Burbage and Kemp, nine years later, as playing before the Queen. Actors

tradition, coming through Beeston from Augustine Phillips, who was in Shakespeare's own company, tells us that Shakespeare acted "exceedingly well." Now it is the distinguishing character of a good actor that he has a keen eye for manners. Nothing of this sort, that he sees, escapes him; and what he sees he can imitate. If Shakespeare, then, had this actor's quality, is it "wildly improbable, to say the least of it," that in six or seven years he had improved what chances he had of observing manners in London so as to be able to represent them on the stage? I submit, then, that the urbanity of Shakespeare's first comedies does not need a miracle to account for it. For the wit I cannot suppose we are asked to account. That is native, and, I suggest, is not so urbane as if Shakespeare had been "a gentleman born."

To pass, then, to "Venus and Adonis," that other "miracle," as Mr. Greenwood would have us regard it. "What are the probabilities," asks Mr. Greenwood, "of a butcher's or draper's assistant at Stratford-on-Avon at the present time, born in illiterate surroundings, and brought up as Shakespeare was brought up, writing (say), at the age of twenty-one, a polished, cultured, elaborate, and scholarly poem, such as 'Venus and Adonis,' and of the same high degree of excellence? Should we not look upon it as an almost miraculous performance? In Shakespeare's time, and for a youth of Shakespeare's environment, it would have been a miracle of ten-fold marvel"

(p. 64). Ah, no; there speaks the clever advocate addressing the common sense of the gentlemen in the box. The miracle is to be explained mainly by the fact that it was not in the twentieth, but at the end of the sixteenth century, when the Spirit of Literature was abroad in England, and when the education of the grammar schools was still in the Latin classics. Would Bottom and his troupe to-day play "Pyramus and Thisbe"? And there are two other things to be borne in mind. First, the poet had a model; the "Venus and Adonis" is closely modelled upon Lodge's "Glaucus and Scilla." Secondly, the poet was no longer in his first youth. He was twenty-nine when he printed his poem (1593), and twenty-six when Lodge's poem appeared. By 1593 he had already been eight years in London, in touch for the last part of the time with such culture, at any rate, as was possessed by the young courtiers and lawyers who haunted the public stage; and it is noticeable that the men of his early plays are much better drawn than his great ladies. To conclude this question of Shakespeare's learning, is it not significant that it struck no *contemporary* writer as "miraculous" that his poems and plays should be the work of a Stratford player?

7. *There is no contemporary evidence identifying the player with the author of the plays and poems.* Let me test this negative in a few particular instances:

(1) *Richard Field, who published the "Venus and Adonis," was a native of Stratford.* Mr. Greenwood

acknowledges this, and yet he says "there is absolutely nothing to show that Field had any acquaintance with, or any knowledge of, Shakspere" (of Stratford). Now Richard Field, who was of Shakespeare's own age, did not leave Stratford till he was fifteen; and their fathers were acquainted, for John Shakespeare, when Henry Field died, attested the inventory of his goods and chattels. To most people this will be strong corroborative evidence that the poet of "Venus and Adonis" and the Stratford youth were the same person.

(2) *The poet, player, and playmaker are identified in the "Return from Parnassus."* In this play, acted at Cambridge in 1601, one of the *dramatis personæ*, Ingenioso, gives a catalogue of poets to his friend Judicio, amongst them William Shakespeare and Benjamin Johnson. Judicio characterises them one by one; on William Shakespeare he says: "Who loves not Adon's love or Lucrece rape" (i. 2). Later in the play the actors Burbage and Kemp are introduced discussing the difference between the University playwrights and those attached to the playing companies; and Kemp says, "Few of the university pen plays well; they smell too much of that writer Ovid and that writer Metamorphosis, and talk too much of Proserpina and Jupiter. Why, here's *our fellow* Shakespeare puts them all down, ay, and Ben Jonson too" (iv. 3). I ask, then, if an author in the same play speaks of a poet and a player-playwright both as Shakespeare, and (which Mr. Greenwood thinks

important) spells the name the same way in each case, is this not evidence that they were the same person? If not, Mr. Greenwood must say that the poet "Benjamin Johnson," who is mentioned along with the poet "William Shakespeare" in the first act, is a different person from the playwright "Ben Jonson" who is mentioned along with the player and play-writer "Shakespeare" in the fifth act. And, indeed, he ought to say so, for the names are differently spelt! But what, as matter of fact, does Mr. Greenwood say to the evidence of the "Return from Parnassus"? He has nothing to say, and so he introduces his *deus ex machina*. These are his words: it has "little or no evidentiary value as regards the question at issue," for it is "quite consistent with the theory that Shake-speare was in reality a pseudonym" (p. 330). But we have already seen that the only evidence offered in support of that extraordinary "theory" breaks down as soon as it is examined.

(3) *The player and playwright are identified in an epigram of John Davies of Hereford.* Mr. Greenwood goes through the contemporary allusions to Shakespeare, like Diogenes with his lantern, looking for an honest identification of the player with the poet and playwright; and he comes upon an epigram,[1] inscribed "To our English Terence Mr. Will. Shake-speare." The hyphen looks attractive, and Terence was certainly a play-maker, not an actor, so Mr. Greenwood proceeds to read the epigram; but he

[1] For another epigram by the same writer see p. 76.

finds that it speaks of Shake-speare as "playing kingly parts." Here, then, is the identification of playwright with player of which he was in search. No; a philosopher is not so easily satisfied. I transcribe Mr. Greenwood's words, adding a few italics for emphasis: "John Davies seems to have the player in his mind rather than the poet. *Did he perchance mentally separate the two?*" As philosophy this is excellent, for we cannot identify what we do not "mentally separate," but I should like to have the opinion of Mr. Greenwood's benchers upon its merit as an appreciation of evidence in regard to the point in question.

(4) *The Earl of Southampton.* Mr. Greenwood denies that there is a "scrap of evidence" that the Stratford player was patronised by the Earl of Southampton to whom the poet of the same name dedicated his verses. One could not be surprised if Mr. Greenwood were right, for the only evidence in the case of the poet is the dedicatory letter prefixed to his verses, and an actor cannot dedicate his gestures. However, there is a tradition recorded by Rowe that "my Lord Southampton at one time gave him a thousand pounds to enable him to go through with a purchase which he heard he had a mind to." Now this tradition came to Rowe on the authority of Sir William Davenant, who was the godson of the Stratford player, so that it is "a scrap of evidence" as to the relation of the player with Southampton. Both Halliwell-Phillipps and Mr. Lee

think the tradition probable, even if the sum be exaggerated. The story has no parallel that I know of, and is not a likely one to have been invented.

8. "*It is hardly possible to conceive that the poems and plays were written in William Shakespeare's illegible illiterate scrawl*" (p. 14). The answer is that all we have, so far as we know,[1] of Shakespeare's handwriting consists of five signatures, three of them written on his will a month before his death. These are beyond criticism by any humane person. In regard to the other two, I join issue with Mr. Greenwood and deny that they are either illegible or illiterate. The appeal can only be to the eyesight and judgment of persons accustomed to read our older hands. But it is possible to call attention to certain details which may escape the casual observer. (1) The two signatures are in two different scripts; no illiterate person would write two hands, but playwrights did so habitually to distinguish the text from the stage directions—a fact that anyone may verify who will consult the manuscript plays in the British Museum. (2) The signatures are those of a man accustomed to much writing, for they avoid the least superfluity in the formation and connection of letters. Perhaps Mr. Greenwood was misled into calling the signatures "illiterate" by the fact that

[1] I say "so far as we know," because unless an autograph signed manuscript turns up, we have not a large enough specimen of Shakespeare's handwriting to judge by. Some have thought that the abstract of Holinshed (Sloane 1090) may be Shakespeare's.

PLATE I.

SHAKESPEARE'S AUTOGRAPH SIGNATURE APPENDED TO THE PURCHASE-DEED OF A HOUSE IN BLACKFRIARS ON MARCH 10, 1613.

Reproduced from the original document now preserved in the Guildhall Library, London.

PLATE II.

SHAKESPEARE'S AUTOGRAPH SIGNATURE APPENDED TO A DEED MORTGAGING HIS HOUSE IN BLACKFRIARS ON MARCH 11, 1613.

Reproduced from the original document now preserved in the British Museum.

they are written in the Old English hand, about which he is contemptuous, for he goes on to contrast them with "Ben Jonson's clear and excellent *Italian* handwriting." Jonson's writing is certainly "clear and excellent," being modelled on his master Camden's; but the only manuscript we possess of a play of his—"The Masque of Queens"—is written not in the Italian, but in the Old English hand, the Italian being used only for purposes of emphasis and distinction. Our one play of Massinger's is written and distinguished in the same manner.

9. "*There is not a letter, not a note, not a scrap of writing from the pen of Shakspere which has come down to us except five signatures*" (p. 17). Where are the manuscripts of Shakespeare's plays? They have gone to the same place as the manuscripts of Marlowe, and Beaumont and Fletcher, and Greene and Peele, and Dekker and Drayton, and Chapman and Ford. There survives, I believe, of all that treasure, which in our autograph-hunting age would be worth a king's ransom, one masque of Jonson, one play of Massinger, one of Heywood. But where are Shakespeare's letters among his private friends? When Mr. Greenwood has collected a dozen letters other than begging letters among all Shakespeare's contemporary dramatists it will be time enough to make a mystery of the absence of a Shakespearian correspondence. Still undoubtedly there may have been something complexional in Shakespeare's silence. Every man has his humour, and all men are not

given to letter-writing. An evidence of this idiosyncrasy may be found in the absence of the commendatory lines on other poets of which the Elizabethan age had its share, though the fashion set in later. Mr. Greenwood thinks this silence of the dramatist very suspicious. But he overdoes his case when he treats Ben Jonson as the standard in this matter.

10. *Jonson wrote hundreds of occasional poems, lines to friends and patrons, elegies, epitaphs, epithalamiums. Where are Shakespeare's similar effusions?* "Why should William Shakspere of Stratford have played the part of William the Silent?" (p. 200). It is difficult to take this sort of criticism seriously. Where are the hundreds of epigrams of Lyly and Marlowe, of Ford and Webster? Where are the epithalamiums of Kyd? the elegies of Marston? And Echo, as Mr. Greenwood is fond of saying, "answers Where?" But how thoughtless is this constant comparison of Shakespeare with Jonson! Jonson was a strenuous and not very popular playwright, but he was a master of occasional verse. He was "the Horace" of the times, as Sir Edward Herbert called him; and, indeed, he called himself so in the "Poetaster." Shakespeare was the most successful playwriter of his generation, with a lyrical gift quite un-Horatian. Why then should he be expected to write odes and epodes, simply because Jonson did? Mr. Greenwood does not seem to have grasped the elementary fact about Jonson, that in most things he did, he was exceptional in his age. Alone of all the

Elizabethan dramatists he collected his plays; alone of them all a man of learning, he consorted with men of learning; poet-laureate and popular with the king, he became popular with the courtiers. Now the epithet Jonson applies to Shakespeare is "gentle," which must imply a temperament in marked contrast with the self-assertive temperament of Jonson himself. Probably Shakespeare was shy—a malady that even to-day afflicts an occasional man of letters. In every literary age there have been men who, without being parasites, have been content to form a part of the furniture of great houses; and there have been others who, like Shakespeare and Cowley, have preferred their own fireside. But Mr. Greenwood carries on his invidious comparison to the very grave.

11. *Jonson's death "was greeted with a chorus of elegiac and panegyrical verses, poured forth by the best poets of the moment. How different was the case of Shakespeare!"* (p. 201). Yes and how different was the case of Beaumont in the same year; though, being a Beaumont, he found a grave along with his brother in Westminster Abbey. It was not Jonson the dramatist who was applauded, but Jonson the dictator of letters in London; the wits who contributed their elegies to Jonsonus Virbius were technically "his sons"; men of the younger generation, like Falkland and Waller and Jasper Mayne. Jonson had set the fashion of the new age, and he was its most venerated tradition; just as his great

namesake, Samuel Johnson, had become at his death the embodiment of the literary tradition of the mid-eighteenth century. When Shakespeare died in 1616, his star was already paling before the new light of Fletcher; and the silence of the poets round the grave of the Stratford player is not so conspicuous, considering the fashion of the day, as their silence at the publication of the great Folio of the London dramatist.[1]

12. *Ben Jonson's mysterious relations with the Folio of Shakespeare's plays.* On this point Mr. Greenwood is far from lucid. He spends much time in defending Malone's opinion that Jonson wrote or revised the preface "to the great variety of readers" signed by the players Hemminge and Condell, in which I should agree with him (though I should not agree that he wrote the Dedication); and I would add that one of the strongest arguments for Jonson's authorship is the passage he puts into the players' mouth: "What he thought he uttered with that easiness, that we

[1] On this point Mr. Lee's investigation into the history of the preliminary leaves of the Folio is illuminating. After showing from the signatures the probable intention of the printers, he continues: "Subsequently Shakespeare's friend Ben Jonson forwarded not merely the fine poem 'To the memory of my beloved, the Author,' which was set up on both sides of the unallotted blank leaf, but the lines on the portrait, which were allotted to an inserted fly-leaf, appropriately facing the title. Hugh Holland, a friend of Jonson's, fired by his example, afterwards sent a commendatory sonnet, which was set up on one side of a second interpolated leaf; and on a later day Leonard Digges and James Mabbe, two admirers of Shakespeare, who were in personal relations with the publisher Blount, paid Blount and Shakespeare jointly the compliment of sending two further sets of commendatory verse, which were brought together on the front side of yet a third detached leaf." (Introduction to Oxford Facsimile.)

have scarce received from him a blot in his papers"; for he tells us in his "Discoveries" that he had *often* had from the players this testimony to their fellow's facility. But when from this simple premiss Mr. Greenwood goes on to hint that, as Jonson was in this year (1623) working for Bacon, his connexion with the Folio may bring with it that of his patron, the answer is complete and can be given out of Mr. Greenwood's own mouth. He points out, as any critic must, that the Folio text of "Richard II." and "Midsummer Night's Dream" is inferior in some respects to that already before the public in certain Quartos; and also that "Titus Andronicus," which the Folio includes, was probably not by Shakespeare at all. The irresistible conclusion is that the author of the plays was either dead, or uninterested in their publication. If he were dead, he could not have been Bacon; and if he were uninterested, why did he publish?[1]

13. *Jonson's commendatory poem.* In dealing with this Mr. Greenwood gives us one of the finest exhibitions of what he calls "bluff" that I have ever witnessed. "We must remember," he says "that Jonson's verses are of the highest importance to the Stratfordians. Had it not been for the poem prefixed to the Folio of 1623, . . . I verily believe that the Stratfordian

[1] Incidentally Mr. Greenwood makes the suggestion that as the Folio text of *Richard III.* preserves the misprints of the Quarto of 1622, and yet contains additional matter, it must have been retouched after the actor's death (1616); but a sufficient and more plausible explanation is that the editors of the Folio took a 1622 text as the basis of their "copy" for press.

hypothesis would long ago have been given up as an exploded myth, or, rather, would never have obtained foothold at all" (p. 106). However this may be, the poem is there, and signed by Ben Jonson. What has Mr. Greenwood to say about it? Does not Jonson in this introductory poem call the author of the plays "sweet swan of Avon," thereby implying his connexion with Stratford? "To all outward appearance he does," assents Mr. Greenwood, and there leaves it. But if that is his case, must he not at this point bring evidence that Jonson was a notorious liar? In regard to the whole poem, he says that it is "a riddle," and that "by the Stratfordians it has to be ingeniously, if not ingenuously, explained away." This is pretty good, from the author of the comment on the "Swan of Avon." What Mr. Greenwood has in mind is the discrepancy between what Jonson said about his friend's "art" in his formal eulogy, and what he said in a private conversation as reported by Drummond of Hawthornden. In the poem he had said :—

> "Nature herself was proud of his designs
> And joyed to wear the dressing of his lines!
> . . . . . .
> Yet must I not give Nature all: thy Art,
> My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.
> For though the poets' matter Nature be,
> His Art doth give the fashion. And that he
> Who casts to write a living line must sweat
> (Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
> Upon the Muses' anvil; turn the same
> (And himself with it) that he thinks to frame

Or for the laurel he may gain a scorn,
For a good poet 's made as well as born ;
And such wert thou."

Of his conversation with Drummond, that poet notes :—

"His censure of the English poets was this. . . . That Shakspeer wanted art. Shakspeer in a play brought in a number of men saying they had suffered ship-wrack in Bohemia, where there is no sea near by some 100 miles."[1]

Well, at the risk of seeming more ingenious than ingenuous, I must confess that what discrepancy there is between these judgments seems to me very human and natural: and I for one love the rugged old man all the better for it. It must be remembered that Jonson had failed as a playwright where Shakespeare had succeeded, and this in spite of the fact, as he believed, that he was the better artist of the two. In private talk the soreness came out; but on an occasion which called for public eulogy he suppressed it. Still, if we look closely at the lines about Art, we cannot fail to observe that they are built on the model of the precept *laudando precipere*. This part of the poem is rather an address to would-be poets than a eulogy of Shakespeare.

[1] Would it be unkind to ask Mr. Greenwood why, if Jonson was in touch with the author of *The Winter's Tale*, as it was going through the press, he did not get him to correct the blunder? And if the blunder struck Jonson as so silly that he could not help talking about it, was Mr. Greenwood's imaginary poet—the man of learning and culture—likely to be less well-informed about the continent of Europe, so as to be at the mercy of Greene's novel, on which the play is based, where the mistake is first made?

Shakespeare's lines were "living," therefore he must have had "art" as well as genius. And, of course, when Jonson said to Drummond that "Shakespeare wanted art," he meant that he took too little pains about his work, not that he took none; as the example he gave shows. That this is the true interpretation of the not very difficult "riddle" is shown by the fuller discussion of the topic which Jonson included in his "Discoveries":—

"*De Shakespeare nostrat*[*i*].—*Augustus in Hat*[*erium*]. I remember the players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare that in his writing (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted out a line. My answer hath been, Would he had blotted out a thousand. Which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance, who chose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted; and to justify mine own candour: *for I loved the man, and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry as much as any.* He was, indeed, honest and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions; wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped: 'Sufflaminandus erat,' as Augustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his own power, would the rule of it had been so too. Many times he fell into those things, could not escape laughter: as when he said in the person of Cæsar, one speaking to him, 'Cæsar, thou dost me wrong.' He replied, 'Cæsar did never wrong but with just cause,' and such like; which were ridiculous. But he redeemed his vices with his virtues. *There was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned.*"

I have quoted this passage from the "Discoveries"

at full length, not only for the sake of showing that its judgment of Shakespeare is perfectly reconcilable with that of the great encomium prefixed to the Folio, making allowance for the difference between prose and verse, but also because, taken by itself, if Jonson be a witness of credit, it serves as a refutation of Mr. Greenwood's theory of the two Shakespeares. Indeed, it makes Mr. Greenwood very unhappy, for he sees that the players' brag at the beginning implies that Shakespeare belonged to them ; that he was player as well as playwright ; and his solution of the difficulty seems to be only tentative. If I understand him—and I am not sure that I do, for the argument of Chapter XV. is not easy to disentangle—it would run as follows : This passage in the "Discoveries" must be understood as referring only to the player ; the reference to Haterius confirms this, for we must translate *sufflaminandus erat* "he had to be shut up" ; evidently he used to "gag" ; and as we know that the text of the First Folio, for which the players make the same boast of receiving unblotted papers, was not set up from author's manuscripts at all, the players were liars, and cannot be credited here.

But to this attack, which is not wanting in boldness, the following considerations are fatal :—

(1) The reference to Haterius cannot refer to actor's gag. The heading "Augustus in Hat" governs the whole paragraph, and the sense of the paragraph is fixed by the first clause, which refers not to speech but to writing. Thus Jonson himself comes in as

a witness to the identity of the two Shakespeares, not the players only.

(2) But, in respect to the credibility of the players. They do not say in the preface to the Folio that they had received the author's "copy" without blot. They say, or Jonson says for them, as a general praise of their author's merit: "Who, as he was a happy imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together: And what he thought he uttered with that easiness that we have scarce received *from him* a blot in his papers. But it is not our province, who only gather his works, to praise him." The best explanation of this passage is that it is an advertisement of the inspiration of the plays, not of the state of the text; for the players could scarcely mean that they had procured copy for press from an author who had been dead seven years.

(3) Accepting, therefore, the *prima facie* interpretation of this passage as the only possible one—namely, that Jonson does here identify, as Mr Greenwood says, "player Shakspere" with "author Shakespeare" (p. 479)—we are precluded from supposing that he was writing "with his tongue in his cheek," by the fact that he is writing, as he says, for "posterity." If anyone can bring himself to think that Jonson, knowing that his friend Shakespeare, the player, was not the author of the plays that went by his name, and hoping (as Mr. Greenwood tells us he was hoping) that the secret of the true authorship would soon come out, nevertheless wrote

down this serious judgment for "posterity," which, when posterity came to know the truth, would prove him either a fool or a liar—all I can say is he must keep his opinion, which I cannot share.

One word more about Jonson's "Discoveries." They contain a character of Bacon as well as of Shakespeare, a significant fact to anyone who believes in Jonson's honesty. But it has often been remarked that in speaking of Bacon's learning and eloquence Jonson uses an expression, "insolent Greece and haughty Rome," which he uses also when speaking of Shakespeare's dramas in the folio poem. Repetition of a good phrase is a weakness which most authors yield to; but such repetition is less remarkable when the phrase is not original. In writing his description of Bacon's oratory, Jonson had before him Seneca's praise of Cicero, whose eloquence he celebrated above that of "insolent Greece." In transferring this praise to Bacon, Jonson added "haughty Rome." It looks, from the passage itself, as if Bacon were still living when it was penned; and if so, its date may well be contemporary with the eulogy of Shakespeare. However, what strikes one most in the two characters is that while Shakespeare is blamed for his careless facility, which needed the clog, Bacon is praised for his terseness of speech, which made it impossible to miss a word without loss to the sense.

14. *The silence of Philip Henslowe.* The argument indicated by this heading takes Mr. Greenwood twenty-five pages to develop. It can be stated and

answered in very few lines. Henslowe was owner of the Rose Theatre on the Bankside, and his Diary, which is preserved at Dulwich, contains elaborate accounts of all sorts; amongst them his share in the takings at the Rose Theatre, and his dealings with playwrights in connexion with the Lord Admiral's company, of which he was manager. Now, Shakespeare's company—Lord Strange's, and on his death the Lord Chamberlain's—acted at the Rose Theatre only between the following dates: February 19 to June 27, 1592; December 29, 1592, to February 1, 1593; June 3 to 15, 1594; and with their internal affairs Henslowe had no concern at all. Hence the only references to Shakespeare that we could expect must come in the few months that his company was acting at the Rose in 1592–3 or the few days in 1594. And, as a fact, we have a reference to takings at sixteen performances of "harey the VI."—*i.e.* "1 Henry VI."[1]—between March 3, 1592, and January 31, 1593, though no author's name is mentioned to that or any other play in the account. Where, then, is the problem in Henslowe's silence? To show that I am not doing Mr. Greenwood an injustice, I must give an extract from his argument:—

"Now here is another most remarkable phenomenon. Here is a manuscript book, dating from 1591 to 1609, which embraces the period of Shakespeare's greatest activity; and in it we find mention of practically all the dramatic writers of that day with any claims to distinction—men whom Henslowe

[1] See p. 62.

had employed to write plays for his theatre; yet nowhere is the name of Shakespeare to be found among them, or, indeed, at all. Yet if Shakespeare the player had been a dramatist, surely Henslowe would have employed him also, like the others, for reward in that behalf! It is strange indeed, on the hypothesis of his being a successful playwright, as well as an actor, that the old manager should not so much as mention his name in all this large manuscript volume!" (p. 353). The argument here is, because the playwright of the Chamberlain's company was a man of genius, it is "strange indeed" that he should not be mentioned among the writers for the Admiral's company, who were so much inferior. One might as well argue that if a poet who lives in Berkshire is really a successful poet, it is "strange" that his name should not once appear in all the hundreds of pages of the London Directory.

There are one or two other points raised by Mr. Greenwood which I ought to examine, but this paper is already too long. I have said nothing about that slough of the Poetomachia in which Baconians love to wallow, because Shakespeare cannot be shown to have taken any part in it. When in the interpretation of the "Poetaster," for example, one side proposes to identify Shakespeare with "Virgil" and the other side with "Crispinus,"[1] that play is best left

[1] Mr. Greenwood's attempt at a parallel between Shakespeare's coat-of-arms and that of Crispinus is not very happy. "A bloody toe between three thorns pungent" is nearer to Marston's "a fesse

out of the controversy. The only serious omission of which I am conscious is the doubt raised by Shakespeare's use of law terms; and that would require a treatise by itself, for it must involve a consideration of the way in which law terms are used in all contemporary literature, and also an investigation into how much of Shakespeare's legal phraseology can be traced to the innumerable law papers belonging to the family suits. Perhaps Mr. Lee will give us the former by and by; Mrs. Stopes is, I believe, already engaged upon the latter. Meanwhile it is satisfactory to observe that if distinguished lawyers of our own generation can be quoted for the opinion that Shakespeare's knowledge of law implies a professional training, other lawyers, no less distinguished, can be quoted on the other side. The most cogent fact, to my own mind, that has so far been elicited in the discussion is this —that the Elizabethan dramatist who makes least use of law for metaphor and illustration is the only one who practised as a barrister, John Ford, of the Middle Temple.[1]

dancetté ermine between three fleurs-de-lis argent" than to Shakespeare's "Or, on a bend sable, a spear of the first." "A bloody toe," as Mr. Fleay says, is Jonson's joke on Marston's name, *quasi* Mars' toen. The only likeness is in the mottoes, "not without mustard" and "non sans droit"; but "not without——" was the commonest form of motto. Moreover, if Jonson made jokes about Cri-spinas (in reference to the "thorns") it is idle to say that what he meant was Crisp-inas (in reference to *Shake* speare) (pp. 37, 461). The "Poet-ape" of Jonson's epigram is probably also Marston. In *Poetaster* (v. 1) Crispinus is called "poetaster and plagiary."

[1] "Webster and the Law: a parallel by L. J. Sturge," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, 1906.

II

THE STORY OF THE LIFE

"Others abide our question : thou art free.
We ask and ask."

—ARNOLD.

IT is strange to remember, in these days of multiplied biographies, most of them stretching to two volumes, how little curious our ancestors were about the private lives of the men whom they delighted to honour. Shakespeare died in 1616. His first biography was given to the world nearly a century later (1709), by Nicholas Rowe, and of the ten facts which it contains, eight, according to Edmund Malone, who wrote just a century later still, are incorrect. Malone, who was the most learned, and also the sanest, of Shakespearian commentators, was also the first person to take the scientific view of a biography. He begins his account by drawing up a list of all the people in the seventeenth century who might have written Shakespeare's life and failed to take advantage of their opportunity, persons like Dugdale and Fuller, who were content with

a perfunctory half-dozen lines, when all the time Shakespeare's own daughter Judith was alive and waiting to be questioned. She survived until 1662. Then he gives a list of all the persons whom Rowe might have consulted and failed to consult, persons in the second line of tradition, but still trustworthy evidence. And then he passes to what he himself had been able to gather, no longer, alas, from the living voice, but by researches among official papers in Warwickshire and Worcester, the Public Record Office, and other places. I am proposing on this occasion to review what facts of any importance have been thus gleaned from the rubbish-heap of time, whether by Malone himself or his indefatigable successor, Halliwell-Phillipps, or more recently by Mr. Sidney Lee, partly for their own interest, as showing what were the outward conditions under which so rare a genius was bred and flourished, but still more for any light they may throw upon the character of the great poet himself.

Let me begin by a word upon his name. It has parallels in Shakelaunce, and Shakeshaft, and one or two more; and we may learn that to *shake* a spear meant simply to "wield" it, from such a passage as this in Spenser's "Faerie Queene" (ii. 8, 14):

> "Gold all is not that doth golden seem,
> Ne all good knights that shake well spear and shield."

We may take it, then, that Shakespeare's remote ancestor was a warrior, though not of course a knight; for in the thirteenth century, when such surnames first came into use, and for some centuries after, the name of Shakespeare was exceedingly common, so common, indeed, that an Oxford student who had inherited the name before it became famous, changed it to Saunders, *quod vile reputatum.*

The ancestors of William Shakespeare are believed to have been substantial yeomen for some generations, but they come but dimly into the light of records till the poet's father migrated to Stratford from the neighbouring village of Snitterfield, where his father Richard had land, and then at once we learn something about him. He is summoned on April 29, 1552, with two other residents in Henley Street, Adrian Quiney and Humphry Reynolds, "for making a heap of refuse in the street, against the order of the court," and is fined 12*d.* Four years later he has gained enough substance to buy two houses (one, the present Museum in Henley Street), and then he marries a local heiress, and at once becomes a person of importance in the commonwealth; passing through all the grades of civic office, burgess, constable, affeeror, chamberlain, alderman, at this point becoming *Master* Shakespeare, till, in 1568, he attains the supreme honours of the borough by being elected high-

434572

bailiff. The lady he had married was the daughter of a wealthy farmer of Wilmcote, who was the owner of his father's farm at Snitterfield; she bore the pleasant name of Mary Arden, and was (or was said to be) of some kin with those great Warwickshire people—Roman Catholics and Recusants—the Ardens of Park Hall, and she brought her husband, besides ready money, a house and sixty acres of land called Asbies,[1] and same other property at Snitterfield.

After losing two children, John and Mary Shakespeare had a boy born to them at the end of April 1564, whom they christened William, and he, having escaped the plague that year, which carried off a sixth of the population of Stratford, *non sine dis animosus infans*, would have been four years old when his father was chief magistrate, and so grew into boyhood as the son of one of the most considerable men in the borough. The question has been much canvassed as to his father's business; and as the discussion about it is characteristic of the process by which the facts of Shakespeare's life have

[1] We hear a good deal, by and by, about this estate of Asbies. John Shakespeare mortgaged it in 1578 to his brother-in-law, Edmund Lambert, and ten years later, when he parted with the Snitterfield property to raise money for its recovery, he was told he must not only repay the loan but clear all other debts; and this he was not able to do. Nine years later, when William Shakespeare had become prosperous, a suit was instituted for its recovery; but there is no record of any decree, and the property did not come back to the Shakespeares.

been ascertained, I may be allowed to illustrate that process by this one instance.

Aubrey, the gossiping antiquary, writing in 1680, had mentioned the tradition that Shakespeare's father was a butcher, and that the son, as a boy, exercised his father's trade; adding that "when he killed a calf he would do it in a high style and make a speech." Rowe in his "Life," which was based on the traditions gleaned by Betterton, states that John Shakespeare was "a considerable dealer in wool," and all sensitive people in the eighteenth century were immensely relieved at finding that Shakespeare's father, and presumably Shakespeare himself, had dealt with the outside rather than the inside of the sheep's carcase. Then Malone set out on his researches and discovered from the Stratford records that John Shakespeare is referred to as a glover, and he pointed a polite finger both at Aubrey and at Rowe. Finally Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps comes along, and produces from a Stratford manuscript particulars of two glovers *who used other trades;* one of them, a certain George Perry, who, "besides his glover's trade, useth buying and selling of wool." So we have the woolman and the glover reconciled; and very reasonably, for the gloves most in use at Stratford would have been thick sheepskin gloves. But no instance has been discovered of the same man being both glover and butcher: and as glovers were frequently tanners, and tanners by statute

were prohibited from being butchers, it is almost certain that the tradition that Shakespeare's father was a butcher must be discredited, especially as he is officially described as a glover on two occasions thirty years apart. He is sometimes described simply as a yeoman, and we know from the Stratford records that he trafficked in the produce of his farms, selling at one time timber, at another corn, at another wool.

But whatever may have been John Shakespeare's business or businesses, the important fact for us is that, whereas for twenty years and more he succeeded, by and by he failed. The late Professor Baynes, who wrote the Life of Shakespeare in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," discovered in him the sign of "a sanguine unheedful temper" in his neglect to remove that heap of refuse in Henley Street. But such unheedfulness was the rule in Stratford. Six years later John Shakespeare is fined for "not keeping his gutter clean," along with four other residents, one of them Master Bailiff himself; and there is good evidence that it was William Shakespeare's indifference in such matters to which he owed the fever from which he died. Mr. Baynes is, perhaps, more plausible in his conjecture that John Shakespeare was of a social and pleasure-loving nature (and so inclined to be lavish of his means), from the fact that it was during his year as bailiff, and presumably by his invitation, that for the

first time Stratford was visited by companies of players. I mention these details about the father because it is important for us to realise in what sort of social surroundings the son grew to manhood. To call Shakespeare, as is sometimes done, "the son of a Warwickshire peasant," gives no idea of the true facts about his breeding. To begin with, he would never have known, as too many peasants at all times have known, the demoralising pinch of hunger; at his worst straits for money his father was never driven to sell his house property in Stratford; he would never have known either the still more demoralising cringing before his so-called betters, which is so often in the blood of the peasant class, the heirs of the old serfs: for traders, in the provinces as much as in London, were accustomed to hold their heads high, because they managed their own affairs. Then again, although it is probable that neither of Shakespeare's parents could write, it does not follow that they could not read; at any rate they would see the best society there was in the little market-town. And, if we remember that the poet's mother prided herself on being a gentlewoman by family, although brought up as a yeoman's daughter (and no persons are so careful of gentle traditions as those who are a little better born than those among whom their lot is cast), we may guess that Shakespeare's home was not an ill nursery for one who was presently to stand

before kings, and—what is of more consequence —was to hold up to the English people the highest ideal of womanhood ever presented to them by any of their great writers.

At seven years old[1] or thereabout William would have been sent to the Grammar School of Stratford, where the curriculum was probably that of the other schools of the period: Lily's Latin Grammar and a book of Latin dialogues to start with; then the Distichs of Dionysius Cato, and Æsop's Fables; then in the fourth year some easy passages of Cicero, and parts of Ovid's "Metamorphoses," and, not least, the very popular eclogues of a Renaissance scholar, John Baptist Mantuanus. If he remained longer at school he would proceed to Virgil, Horace, Terence, or Plautus.

It is evident from Shakespeare's plays that their writer had gone through a Grammar School course. "The Merry Wives of Windsor" shews us the first-form boy being catechised in his Accidence; and for an example of the colloquial Latin which the Grammar School taught, it is enough to refer to the conversation of Holofernes and Sir Nathaniel in "Love's Labour's Lost," where the schoolmaster interlards his remarks with scrappy sentences out of the phrase book, like *Satis quod sufficit; Novi hominem tanquam te:* while the parson not being in such good

[1] Cf. 1 *Parnassus* v. 663, "interpreting *pueriles confabulationes* to a company of *seven*-year-old apes."

practice, and endeavouring to emulate him, trips and falls. Holofernes also quotes the first line from Mantuanus's eclogues: "Fauste, precor gelida quando pecus omne sub umbra Ruminat," and exclaims: "Ah, good old Mantuan, I may speak of thee as the traveller doth of Venice: Old Mantuan, Old Mantuan! who understandeth thee not, loves thee not."

I need not stay to point out the many references in Shakespeare's plays to the writings of Ovid—but when persons wish to reduce the "small Latin" that Ben Jonson allowed his friend Shakespeare to nothing at all, it is worth while to remember that the motto from Ovid which Shakespeare prefixed to the "Venus and Adonis" was from a poem—the *Amores*—of which at the time there was no published translation in English. It is interesting also to remember that one of the few books which contain what may be a genuine autograph of Shakespeare is an Aldine copy of Ovid's "Metamorphoses." It is in the Bodleian Library, and passed the eye of Mr. Coxe, who was perhaps the most acute detector of forgeries who ever presided over a library. On the other hand (and in view of recent controversies this may be the more important consideration), that Shakespeare's classical knowledge was not that of a first-rate scholar like Ben Jonson or Francis Bacon, any one may see for himself who will take up the Roman plays; the

marvellous success of those plays in reproducing the ancient Roman spirit is due entirely to the vigour of the poet's imagination, working upon the material supplied in Plutarch's Lives, which he read in Sir Thomas North's translation. But where North blunders, Shakespeare blunders; he made no attempt to go behind his crib, and he blunders where North does not blunder, through ignorance of Roman constitutional history, confusing the functions of tribune and prætor.[1] If any one is tempted to think that it is classical knowledge, and not imagination, that is responsible for the success of Shakespeare's Roman plays, let him turn to Ben Jonson's "Sejanus" and "Catiline," every line, almost, of which is supported by references to authorities, and then consult the verdict of the playgoers of the period; here is one by an Oxford scholar, Leonard Digges:

> "So have I seene when Cæsar would appeare—
> And on the stage at half-sword parley were
> Brutus and Cassius—oh how the audience
> Were ravish'd! with what wonder they went thence;
> When some new day they would not brooke a line
> Of tedious (though well labour'd) Catiline;
> Sejanus too was irksome."

---

[1] Plutarch says that a Roman general standing for the consulship used to appear in the Forum with his toga only, without the tunic beneath it, so as to display his scars more readily. Amyot used the phrase "une robe simple." North, who translated from Amyot, mistook the sense of "simple," and rendered the phrase by "a poor gown." Shakespeare paraphrased this into the "napless vesture of humility."

Of Shakespeare's education outside the walls of the Stratford Grammar School, every one's imagination will furnish him with a better account than I can pretend to give. But we must not forget that on his holidays the boy would have opportunities of making acquaintance (from the outside) with what (from the inside) he was to come to know as his own profession. Every Corpus Christi at Coventry (only thirteen miles from Stratford) there was performed a cycle of miracle plays; and when Hamlet speaks of "outdoing Termagant," and "out-Heroding Herod," and when Bottom speaks of acting in a "Cain-coloured" beard, and Celia calls Orlando's hair "something browner than Judas's," we know that the playwright is reminding the audience of what he and they remembered in their young days of the actors in such pageants. But the year 1569, when Shakespeare was only five years old, saw the introduction into Stratford of actors of another type, a professional company, the Queen's own players from London, who had come by leave of Mr. Bailiff Shakespeare, and opened their visit by a free performance before the council.

What, one wonders, were the plays which on this first occasion they brought with them? We know that in this very year a small boy at Gloucester, named Willis, of the same age as Shakespeare, had witnessed, as he stood between his father's knees, a morality called the "Cradle

of Security," which he describes;[1] did the five-year-old Shakespeare in the same way peep through his father's knees at the players; and, if so, what was the play? Was it a morality of the same old-fashioned type—or was it, perhaps, the fire-new drama written by the Master of Trinity Hall, Thomas Preston, then being acted in town, "The Lamentable Tragedy, mixed full of pleasant mirth, conteyning the Life of Cambises, King of Persia"? Falstaff, at any rate, knew what it meant to "speak in passion, in King Cambyses' vein"; or was it again "The Tragical Comedy of Apius and Virginia," written by one R. B., parts of which seem to have suggested "that tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe—very tragical mirth," which Peter Quince and his fellows presented before the Duke of Athens. Was this the sort of thing young Shakespeare heard?—

"(*Enter* JUDGE APIUS.)

"The Furies fell of Limbo lake
My princely days do short;
All drowned in deadly ways I live,
That once did joy in sport.
O Gods above that rule the skies,
Ye babes that brag in bliss,
Ye goddesses, ye graces, you,
What burning brunt is this?
Bend down your ire, destroy me quick,
Or else to grant me grace,
No more but that my burning breast
Virginia may embrace."

[1] Halliwell-Phillipps, *Life of Shakespeare*, i. 41.

We can imagine the learned Judge continuing in the very words of Pyramus :—

"But stay ;—O spite !
But mark ;—Poor knight,
What dreadful dole is here ?
Eyes, do you see ?
How can it be ?
O dainty duck ! O dear !

"Thy mantle good,
What, stain'd with blood ?
Approach, ye furies fell !
O fates ! come, come ;
Cut thread and thrum ;
Quail, crush, conclude, and quell !"

Shakespeare in after days could afford to laugh good-naturedly at Cambyses and Judge Apius, no less than at Termagant and Herod ; but we cannot exaggerate the probable influence on his imagination of his first introduction to the Renaissance drama, whether it came then or a few years later. Here was a new world of thought and passion, brought vividly before his eyes by these players ; one had but to sit still, and the whole cycle of the world's inner history, its joys and sorrows, wrongs and revenges, could pass before his eyes, as in Friar Bacon's magic glass. If youth can still be stage-struck, when the stage is a commonplace of our civilisation, we need not doubt that the visits of these first travelling companies, when acting was a new art, brought to the imaginative soul of the youthful Shakespeare

dreams and hopes that by and by moulded his life.

Just one thing more about this topic of Shakespeare's education. What did he read at home? One of those wiseacres who think that Shakespeare's plays were written by James I.'s philosophical Lord Chancellor, Francis Bacon, has pointed out to us that Shakespeare in his will says nothing about his library—a remark that, it may be useful to remember, applies no less to the "judicious Hooker," who probably possessed some books all the same.[1] Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps takes a gloomy view of the amount of literature to be found within the houses at Stratford. "Exclusive of Bibles, Church Services, Psalters and Education manuals," he writes, "there were certainly not more than two or three dozen books, if so many, in the whole town." Even so one may hazard a guess that what books there were found their way to Henley Street. We may be sure that Tottell's "Book of Songs and Sonnets," first published in 1557, of which eight editions were issued in thirty years, was known in the district; for did not Master Slender of Gloucestershire possess a copy? And why should not new books have come down occasionally from London? When Shakespeare was fifteen, his school friend Richard Field,

[1] There is no mention of books in the will of Richard Barnefield, or of John Marston, or of Samuel Daniel. Too few contemporary poets had any occasion to make a will.

who by and by published the "Venus and Adonis," left Stratford and his father's tanyard, to be bound apprentice to a London printer, and Field's brother and two other Stratford boys were apprenticed to London printers a few years later or earlier,[1] which of itself proves that the art of printing was recognised in the little community of Stratford; and I for one choose to believe that young Richard Field would have sent down to his friend at Stratford any books he could get hold of, and certainly a book which at the end of that same year made a great stir—the "Shepheard's Calendar," by Edmund Spenser.

We learn from Rowe, who had the information from Betterton the actor, who is supposed to have gone to Stratford in 1708 to collect intelligence, that "the narrowness of his father's circumstances, and the want of his assistance at home, forced him to withdraw his son from school." He does not say when; and he adds that "upon his leaving school he seems to have given entirely into that way of living which his father proposed to him," which is what might be expected in a good son, but does not help us to determine his calling. Aubrey tells us that he exercised his father's trade, which may have been so, especially as his marriage at eighteen would seem to prove that he was not apprenticed to a very strict master; for apprentices

[1] See introduction to *Venus and Adonis* fac-simile by Sidney Le p. 39.

who married before they were out of their articles lost their freedom. There is a further tradition which Aubrey received from Beeston the actor, who would have had it in a direct line, not from gossiping townsfolk, but from the poet himself; and I give it in Aubrey's own words: "Though as Ben Jonson says of him that he had but little Latin and less Greek, he understood Latin pretty well, for he had been in his younger years a schoolmaster in the country." A youth of proved abilities, with a known taste for letters, might well have been employed as usher at the Grammar School when his father's business failed.

We must pass now to speak of that very critical event in the life of the poet, his marriage, and his subsequent departure from Stratford. I will give as shortly as possible the ascertained facts. In the Registry of the diocese of Worcester there is a *bond* dated November 28, 1582, for the issue of a licence for the marriage of William Shakespeare and Ann Hathwey,[1] with once asking of

[1] The late Mr. C. J. Elton's attempt to prove that this Anne was not the daughter of Richard Hathaway of Shottery fills me with amazement. On the one side are the facts (1) that the persons who applied for Anne's marriage licence also attested Richard's will, (2) that Richard's shepherd lent Mrs. Shakespeare money. "These," says Mr. Elton, "are only subsidary details." All he has to urge on the other side is that in Richard Hathaway's will his daughter is called Agnes, and that "as early as the thirty-third of Henry VI. it was decided that Anne and Agnes are distinct baptismal names and not convertible." To which the layman cannot but reply that there would have been no need to decide the point if the names had not been convertible by ordinary custom. Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps

the banns, such a bond (to indemnify the bishop from any action arising out of the granting of the licence) being the usual way of assuring the authorities that there was no canonical impediment to the marriage and that the necessary consents had been obtained. On the previous day a licence was issued to a William Shakespeare to marry Ann Whately, of Temple Grafton. There seems here, at first sight, the outline of a romance. Imagination conjures up the figure of young William galloping off to Worcester "post-haste for a licence," as Mr. Jingle says, to marry one lady, and the friends of another, with whom presumably there was a pre-contract, pursuing him, and binding him down to marry with only one week's grace. But the romance will not bear investigation. The licence and the bond must refer to the same marriage, or else you have a bond without a licence, and a licence without a bond, and that the bond in the one case should be lost and the licence not be entered in the other is exceedingly improbable.[1] Moreover, there is no power even in a bishop's licence to compel a freeborn Englishman to marry against

has collected instances (ii. 185). Thus: "Thomas Greene and Agnes his wife," in a birth register of 1602, are referred to three years later as "Thomas Greene and Anne his wife."

[1] See "Shakespeare's Marriage," by J. W. Gray. Mr. Gray has been at the pains to go through the Bishop's Registers at Worcester, and has found other cases of blunder between the surname on the licence and that on the bond.

his will; particularly when he is a minor, and an apprentice. The need to obtain a licence at all arose from the fact that only by licence could marriages be solemnised at certain seasons of the year; one such close time extended from Advent to the octave of Epiphany. When therefore a licence was applied for on November 27, three days before Advent, it looks as if something had happened which would make it impossible to wait until January 13; and this might be the fact that Shakespeare had to leave Stratford in haste; and a recent writer on the subject, Mr. J. W. Gray, finds the need for haste in the traditional act of poaching which inflamed against him the wrath of Sir Thomas Lucy.

The objection to that theory is that if we send Shakespeare away from Stratford in November 1582, we must bring him back again, because, although his eldest daughter Susanna was born at the end of May following, the twins Hamnet and Judith were not born until February 1585; and if Shakespeare was safe in returning home, it is hard to see why there was need for so precipitate a flight. Of course, we may consider that the threatened storm blew over, that it was a first offence, and that Sir Thomas Lucy proved tractable. Another suggestion recently made[1] is that Anne Hathaway's father, whose will

[1] See letter from Mr. T. Le Marchant Douse, in *Times* (supplement), April 21, 1905.

was proved in July of this year, having bequeathed his daughter the sum of £6, 3s. 4d. to be paid her *on the day of her marriage*, the prospect of such a marriage portion induced the happy pair to precipitate matters with the consent of the bride's friends as soon as the money was forthcoming. For it is significant that the two sureties to the marriage bond are two farmers of Shottery, Fulk Sandells and John Richardson, one of whom was a witness to Richard Hathaway's will, and the other its "supervisor." This, I confess, appears to me to be the only plausible explanation yet offered for the hasty wedding. I do not think that the regularising of the union into which Shakespeare had entered with Anne Hathaway furnishes a sufficient motive for the extreme haste of the proceeding.

That the departure for London, whenever it did occur, was caused by the action of Sir Thomas Lucy, admits of little doubt.[1] We have the tradition of it which Betterton found at Stratford, and we have an earlier reference to the tradition in the account of a Gloucestershire archdeacon of the

[1] Malone doubted the poaching tradition on the ground that there is no evidence of a statutable park at Charlecote in Elizabeth's reign. Halliwell-Phillipps nevertheless produced evidence that the Sir Thomas Lucy of 1602 presented a buck to Lord Keeper Egerton, so that there were deer to steal; and if none were presented to the Stratford people, as Malone noted, it may have been because they helped themselves too freely. It does not follow because Sir Thomas, not having the Queen's licence, could not indict under the statute (5 Eliz.), that he had not power to make himself unpleasant.

seventeenth century named Davies, who describes Shakespeare as "much given to all unluckiness in stealing venison and rabbits, particularly from Sir-Lucy, who had him whipt, and at last made him fly his native country to his great advancement. But his revenge," continues the archdeacon, "was so great that he is his Justice Clodpate [he means Shallow], and calls him a great man, and that (in allusion to his name) bore three louses rampant for his arms."

I need but recall to your recollection the famous scene at the opening of "The Merry Wives of Windsor," where Justice Shallow enters in a great fury of indignation against Falstaff for breaking his park and stealing the deer, thereby abusing in his person a very ancient family whose members for three hundred years had signed themselves "armigero," and "borne the dozen white luces in their coat." Upon which the kindly Welsh parson Sir Hugh Evans, misunderstanding the kind of luces referred to—for a luce was the fish generally called a pike—and also mistaking the nature of the "coat" on which they figured, remarks:

"The dozen white louses do become an old coat well."

Now the pun in itself is so poor that it is inconceivable Shakespeare introduced it for its own sake; and when we remember that this charge of the *luce* had been associated with the Lucy family

ever since heraldry was a science,[1] and inevitably suggested their name, it is put beyond reasonable doubt that Shakespeare intended a personal affront; while by substituting twelve luces for three, which was the number on the Lucy coat, he kept on the windy side of the Star Chamber. We cannot pretend to judge Shakespeare in this matter, because we do not know the extent of the provocation he had received. Tradition says he was "whipt." Speaking for myself, I cannot be sorry that his resentment took this shape, because it has supplied me, times without number, with an unanswerable question to put to those persons who tell one that Shakespeare's plays were written by Bacon: viz. How Bacon, who was a friend and correspondent of Sir Thomas Lucy's, can be conceived making this unprovoked and very ungentlemanlike jest upon another gentleman's coat of arms? Shakespeare at the date of "The Merry Wives of Windsor" was not yet "a gentleman born." I need not spend time in endeavouring to show that this boyish escapade among Sir Thomas Lucy's deer did not permanently ruin Shakespeare's character. It would be a poor compliment to Shakespeare to condone a breach of the eighth commandment. But simple justice requires me to explain that at

[1] See notes in Malone, viii. 11. Under the names of *ged* and *pike* this fish was borne, also in "canting heraldry," by the families of Geddes, Pickering, &c. The only other family that bore the *luce* was Way in the west country; but with them it was sometimes blazoned simply as "fish," and they were not well-known people like the Lucys.

this period deer-stealing was looked upon among respectable people with even greater tolerance than smuggling two centuries later. It was not in the least blackguardly, as poaching is to-day. It was a very favourite pastime, for instance, with Oxford undergraduates, who then as now might stand as the pattern of good form. We find it chronicled without special comment along with fencing, dancing, and hunting the hare, among the youthful sports of a certain Bishop of Worcester.[1] And there was a proverb of the day, that "venison is nothing so sweet as when it is stolen." As to the date of the incident we have no information. A probable date seems to be offered about February 1585 when the twins were christened, for Shakespeare had no more children; and it may be significant that in March of that year Sir Thomas Lucy was in charge of a Bill in the House of Commons for the preservation of game.[2] If Shakespeare did not find employment at a London theatre in 1585, he must have waited till 1587, for in 1586 the theatres were closed on account of the Plague.

Here, then, Shakespeare's youth ends. For seven years after 1585 he disappears from sight, lost in London; when he emerges it is as a leading actor and playwright. How he spent the interval is mere matter of conjecture; but

[1] Dr. J. Thornborough (born 1552). See Malone, ii. 13

[2] Malone, ii. 131.

tradition asserts that he joined the theatre in the very lowest rank, that of "servitor," and so worked his way up. One tradition says that he began *outside* the theatre by holding the horses of the gallants who rode to the play, before he even worked his way in. However that may be, and the tradition implies the knowledge of a very short-lived practice, that of riding to the play,[1] it was not improbably to the long apprenticeship which Shakespeare served to the actor's profession, making him conversant with the stage in all its arrangements, that he owed no small part of the mastery which he was by and by to display as a dramatist. In the first place, he gained that skill in stage-craft—the arrangement of exits and entrances and so forth—which only experience can give; and which makes such plays as "The Comedy of Errors," or such scenes as the forest scene in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," although they are most confusing to read, quite simple and straightforward on the stage. In the second place, he learned how to develop a plot in a thoroughly dramatic fashion, and with the least possible waste of time and energy. It must have struck everybody, for example, how well Shakespeare's plays open; how attention is at once caught and held; and the main action begins without delay. Thirdly, he gained the

[1] Halliwell-Phillipps, i. 80.

eye of a stage-manager for effective "business." Take, for an example, the play of "Macbeth." Shakespeare the poet could have given us the wonderful speeches in which he turns the old chronicle into tragedy, but it was the eye of the trained actor and stage-manager which gave us the witch scenes, the air-drawn dagger, the blood-stained hands that seemed to pluck at Macbeth's eyes, the knocking at the gate, the sleep-walking—points which still tell upon the audience, as they did when it was first put upon the stage. And not only did these seven years advance Shakespeare in the knowledge of his profession, they advanced him also in general culture. We know that "a poet is born and not made"; but Ben Jonson reminds us that "a good poet's made as well as born"; and he is made by study of the world past and present, by men and books. Mr. Sidney Lee has just told us that Shakespeare had read some of the Italian poets of the Renaissance, before he wrote his "Venus and Adonis"; and if he was at the pains to master Italian, we may be sure that he read whatever he found worth reading in his own tongue. Of still greater consequence was his commerce in the world of London with men of all sorts and conditions. And so when a certain class of our friends, to whom I have already referred, ask us how we think it possible that a young man from the Midlands on coming

up to town could produce, perhaps as his very first play, a piece so free from everything provincial, and so full of character and wit and courtly manners, as "Love's Labour's Lost," we may at least reply, without raising the difficult point of genius, that seven years in London at the impressionable age of twenty-one can work great changes in a man's experience of life even to-day. (On "Love's Labour's Lost" see p. 13.)

When we first meet Shakespeare's name as a player—in any formal fashion—it is in a very important document, the accounts of the Queen's Treasurer of the Chamber, and in the best company. It runs thus in modern spelling:—

"To William Kempe, William Shakespeare, and Richard Burbage, servants to the Ld. Chamberlain, upon the councils warrant, dated at Whitehall 15 March 1594, for 2 several comedies or interludes shewed by them before her majesty in Christmas time last past, viz. upon St. Stephens day and Innocents day—£13 6 8 and by way of her majesty's reward £6 13 4 in all £20."

Now see what this means: Kemp was the greatest comedian, and Burbage the greatest tragedian, of his time; and here is Shakespeare standing between them, like Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy in Sir Joshua Reynolds' celebrated picture, a third with the two heads of his profession. After that indisputable evidence to the rank he held in his company there is hardly need to go in search of other testimony

that he was a competent actor; but as it might perhaps be held that Shakespeare's position in the company was due chiefly to the fact that he was its playwright, it may be well to note that, two years before this, Chettle the dramatist refers to Shakespeare in a pamphlet as "*excellent* in the quality he professes,"[1] and Aubrey preserves the opinion of an old actor, William Beeston, who was the son of an apprentice of Augustine Phillips one of Shakespeare's own friends and colleagues, that he acted "exceedingly well," and contrasts him on that point with Ben Jonson, who, according to the same authority, "was never a good actor, but an excellent instructor." It is noticeable, too, that we find Shakespeare's name standing first on the list of actors who performed Ben Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour," a play which his good nature is said to have saved from refusal by his company. By the side of such testimony we need not attach importance to the exact form of the tradition preserved by Rowe that "the *top* of his performance was the Ghost in his own Hamlet," though he may very well have played the part, as Garrick did after him. The only other stage tradition we have is that he was accustomed to play "kingly parts."

If Shakespeare then became an actor and reached the top of his "quality" after working his way through the stages of call-boy and super-

[1] See additional note, p. 78.

numerary, we know for a certainty that when he became a dramatist, he reached the top of that profession, from beginnings as little dignified. When he came to London the leading dramatists were a set of young men, most of them from the universities, who were in the act of revolutionising the stage—it would be as true to say, creating it. The eldest was John Lyly, who wrote comedies chiefly in prose; then there was Thomas Kyd—"sporting Kyd," as Ben Jonson calls him with an ironic play upon his name—who wrote tragedies of a bloodthirsty type, among them a tragedy of "Hamlet," which Shakespeare was afterwards to re-write; George Peele, who wrote tragedies, comedies, and historical plays; Robert Greene, who also wrote everything, but notably one very charming comedy of country life with the queer title of "Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay," and, above all, there was Christopher Marlowe. Now if we turn to that invaluable document the Diary of Henslowe, proprietor of the Rose Theatre, for the year 1592, we find in his cash account such entries as the following:[1]

			£	s.	d.	
19 Feb.	159½	Recd. at fryer bacune		17	3	[Greene's play.
20 ,,		,, mulomurco [*i.e.* Muley Mulocco]		29	0	[Peele's "Battle of Alcazar."
21 ,,		,, orlando		16	6	[An early play of Greene's.

[1] See W. W. Greg's edition, p. 13.

			£	s.	d.	
23 Feb. 159½	Recd. at spanes comodye donne oracoe			13	6	[A fore piece to Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy."
26 ,,	,,	Jewe of malltuse		50	0	[Marlowe's play.
29 ,,	,,	mulamulloco		34	0	
3 March	,,	harey the 6th	3	16	8	

What is the meaning of this sudden rise in the takings at the theatre? An explanation is to be found in a remark of the pamphleteer Thomas Nash, who in a piece called "Pierce Penniless," licensed in August of that year, writes:

"How would it have joyed brave Talbot (the terror of the French) to think that after he had lain 200 years in his tomb, he should triumph again on the stage, and have his bones new embalmed with the tears of ten thousand spectators at least (at several times) who, in the tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding."

Now, whoever wrote the original draft of the "First Part of King Henry VI.," certainly the Talbot scenes were added or re-written by Shakespeare, and it was these scenes that, according to Nash, made the success of the piece. A second and third part of "Henry VI." in the course of the same year, were, in the same way, but to a far greater extent, re-written by this young actor, and their success we can gauge, not this time from a shout of praise, but from a scream of rage sent up by the poor dramatist whose work had thus been worked over. (It has always to be borne in mind in discussing the Elizabethan

drama that plays were sold out and out by the dramatists to one or other company of actors; so that it was in the power of the company, and a very usual custom, to have the plays, when they got a little worn by use, freshened, either by the author, or by a new hand.)[1] In this autumn of 1592 the dramatist Greene lay a-dying, and from his deathbed he made a solemn address to his fellows, Marlowe, Peele, and others, to forsake their vicious courses—they were all notoriously wild—and to live repentant lives before it was too late. And he concludes his appeal with a rather vague sentence, the general sense of which seems to be, that if they find themselves in want they must not look to the players for help. The players, it must be understood, occupied something of the same position in regard to the dramatist as a modern publisher does to his author. The publisher is more likely to be a capitalist than the author. Alleyn, the founder of Dulwich College, Burbage, Heminge, Cundell, Shakespeare himself, made fortunes on the stage, while Greene, and Marlowe, and Drayton, and many other dramatists were put to shifts to make a bare living.

"Base-minded men, all three of you [says Greene], if by my misery ye be not warned; for unto none of you, like

[1] The MS. play *Sir Thomas More* in the British Museum (Harl. 7368) exhibits these phenomena of freshening. There are several handwritings; passages are crossed through and others added; and new drafts are pasted over old ones.

me, sought those burs to cleave; those puppets, I mean, that speak from our mouths, those anticks garnished in our colours. . . . Trust them not, for there is an *upstart crow* beautified with our feathers, that with his 'tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide,' supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse [*i.e.* to stuff it out with epithets] as the best of you; and being an absolute Johannes Factotum, is, in his own conceit, the only Shake-scene in a country."

The line parodied by Greene and applied to its author comes in the Third Part of *Henry VI.* (i. iv. 137), the original draft of which play may well have been in part composed by Greene himself. Halliwell-Phillipps suggests that the line had been rendered specially popular through effective delivery. What Greene meant by 'bombasting out' a blank verse may be understood by a quotation:

> "O tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide;
> How couldst thou drain the life-blood of the child,
> To bid the father wipe his eyes withal,
> And yet be seen to bear a woman's face?
> Women are soft, mild, pitiful and flexible:
> Thou stern, obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless."

Now if we can suppose Sir Charles Wyndham and Mr. Tree taking suddenly to writing plays, and successful plays, or Mr. Murray and Mr. Methuen to writing successful novels, we shall form some idea of the horror that possessed poor Greene's imagination. If players turned playwright, the playwright's occupation was gone; and if, in addition, we remember the contempt in which

the players were held by these poor gentlemen —" puppets that speak from *our* mouths," " anticks garnished in *our* colours," " burs that cleave " to us, we shall realise the consternation that Shakespeare had inspired in this poor indignant spirit.

We come upon evidence of the same sort of feeling in a university play written somewhat later, where a character, Studioso, complains of the actors that,

> " With mouthing words that better wits have framed
> They purchase lands and now esquires are named," [1]

and in a scene where Kempe and Burbage are represented as interviewing Cambridge scholars as likely recruits for their company—who at need would write a part as well as act one—Kempe is made to say: " Few of the university pen plays well; they smell too much of that writer Ovid and that writer Metamorphosis, and talk too much of Proserpina and Jupiter. Why, here's our fellow Shakespeare puts them all down." " Our *fellow* Shakespeare," that is, " our partner." The late Judge Webb, in a book called " The Mystery of William Shakespeare," asserted that no literary man of the day could be " adduced as attesting the responsibility of the *player* for the works which are associated with his name." Well, here is such a statement. If I may say a

[1] *Return from Parnassus* 2, V. i. 1966.

final word about that remarkable heresy: the two arguments that seem to me conclusive that the Shakespearian plays were not written by a gentleman amateur like Francis Bacon are (1) that the dramas display, as I have already pointed out, such wonderful constructive skill, and such knowledge of what is effective on the stage—arts, which can only be learned by long habituation to the theatre —and (2) that so many of the Shakespearian plays are old plays re-written, *e.g.* "Henry IV.," "Henry V.," "King John," "Richard III.," "Merchant of Venice," "Hamlet"; and to re-write an old play is a task no gentleman would have undertaken for his own pleasure, or indeed would have been at liberty to undertake, because the plays were the absolute property of the acting companies.

Shakespeare's growing prosperity is marked in 1596 by an application to Heralds' College for a grant of arms to his father, which, though unsuccessful at the time, succeeded three years later; and in 1597 by the purchase of the Great House at Stratford called "New Place." But his relish of these signs of social advancement must have been sadly dashed by the loss in the former year of his only son, the twelve-year-old Hamnet.

Can we at all figure to ourselves Shakespeare's life now that he was rising into fame?

It is difficult to determine how much of the year he spent in Stratford after the purchase of New Place. In 1597 he appears in a list as the

third largest owner of corn in his ward, which might suggest that he had already made his home there. On the other hand, there is a curious memorandum made by his cousin, Thomas Greene, dated September 9, 1609, about the delay in repairing a house in Stratford, which he was content to permit "the rather because I perceyved I might stay another yere at New Place," which looks as though Shakespeare could not have been in constant residence. Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps points out also that the precepts in an action brought by Shakespeare for the recovery of a debt, on August 17, December 21, 1609, and February 15, March 15, and June 7, 1610, were issued to Greene. So that Shakespeare was apparently away from Stratford on those dates, which cover most of the year. Biographers, therefore, have come to the conclusion that it was not until 1611, when he ceased writing for the stage, that Shakespeare came permanently to reside at Stratford. Nevertheless I like to think that his visits there were neither short nor infrequent. I see no reason to assume that when Shakespeare became the recognised playwright of his company, he would have been expected to appear on the boards with the regularity of those members who were actors only. Indeed it is inconceivable that he should have been expected to produce two plays a year[1]

[1] This tradition is recorded by the vicar of Stratford, John Ward, in 1662. "I have heard that Mr. Shakespeare . . . frequented the

in the intervals left over from the regular practice of an exacting profession. It may be remembered that Hamlet declared that his adaptation of the play which touched the king's conscience ought to get him a share in a theatrical company. And it is a fair inference that Shakespeare's shares depended upon his plays rather than his acting. As to his residence in London, we must bear in mind that during his period upon the stage the theatre was the height of fashion; so that, besides making his fortune, an actor and dramatist of recognised genius would have opportunities of making acquaintance with that section of the fashionable world that cared for art and letters. At that epoch we know that the great nobles were even eager to befriend men of genius. The familiar tone of the dedication of "Lucrece" to Lord Southampton has often been remarked upon. It lends likelihood to the tradition, handed down by Sir William Davenant, that Southampton at one time gave the poet a large sum of money "to enable him to go through with a purchase which he heard he had a mind to." The reference to Essex in one of the choruses of "King Henry V.," which is dragged in by the head and ears, would imply that that nobleman, no less

plays all his younger time, but in his elder days lived at Stratford, and supplied the stage with two plays every year." If the "every year" is to be pressed we must suppose that some manuscripts perished in the fire at the Globe Theatre in 1613.

than his friend Southampton, had admitted the poet to his friendship; and the obvious meaning of the "Sonnets" is that an affectionate intimacy had grown up between Shakespeare and some scion of a noble house whose identity cannot now be determined.[1] And then besides these great people, great in one sense, we know Shakespeare to have been intimate with those who were great in another sense—the men of letters of the day. Fuller, in his "Worthies," has recorded a tradition of the wit combats at the Mermaid tavern between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, comparing the latter to a "Spanish great galleon," solid but slow; the former to an English man-of-war, "lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing." Michael Drayton, a Warwickshire man, is said to have been one of his familiars up to the last. But though tradition links no other literary names than these with Shakespeare's, there can be no doubt that the Mermaid meetings, which owed their beginnings to Sir Walter Ralegh, included all that was distinguished at the time in poetry and the drama.

But while the courtiers were affable in the way that great people always are affable to the men of genius who amuse them, and while Bohemia was friendly, all that was respectable and religious in the City of London was bitterly hostile. All through Elizabeth's reign a battle was waged

[1] I have written at length on this subject in vol. x. of the *Stratford Head Shakespeare* and in my edition of the Sonnets (Ginn).

between the Court and the City as to the toleration of theatres and players at all. If anyone supposes that an actor's profession in Shakespeare's day was respected because it was profitable, he should read[1] the petition of a gentleman called Henry Clifton to the Queen against the Master of the Children of her Chapel for kidnapping his son Thomas, a boy of thirteen. The choirs of the Chapels Royal were recruited in those days, as the navy long continued to be, by impressment. Any boys with good voices from any other choir were liable to be pressed into the service. But when the stage became popular and the various choirs at St. Paul's, Westminster, and the Chapels Royal added acting to their ecclesiastical employment, then, it seems, boys were impressed for the stage who had no singing voices. This little Tom Clifton was seized upon one morning on his way to Christ's Hospital, and taken to the playhouse at Blackfriars, there, in his father's words, "to compell him to exercise the *base* trade of a mercenary interlude player, to his utter loss of time, ruin, and disparagement." The words *base* and *vile* occur again and again in this interesting document, as epithets of the actor's profession; and, coming from a gentleman, they form an apt commentary on certain passages in the "Sonnets," in which Shakespeare contrasts his fortune with that of his young and gentle friend:

[1] Fleay, *History of the Stage*, ii. 127.

"O, for my sake do you with Fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide
Than public means which public manners breeds.
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand:
Pity me, then, and wish I were renew'd."

The bravest of men might be forgiven for wincing now and then when he caught sight of his own trade through the eyes of the public opinion of the day. Whether his fellow-townsmen at Stratford were as contemptuous there is no evidence. It is the fashion to say so, but I hesitate to believe it. The player had made money at any rate, and that the Stratford people were always short of. But it may be guessed that they were proud of him, too; and his father had been somebody among them. Of course the rising tide of Puritanism visited Stratford as other places. The vicar there was a noted Puritan, and so was Dr. Hall, Shakespeare's son-in-law. The town council in 1602, and again in 1612, prohibited players from acting in the borough, and in 1616 gave the King's own company a gratuity for going away quietly. But I am far from being convinced that the dramatist himself would resent this action of the council. He knew better than they did the scandals that haunted the player's profession, and in the "Sonnets" he speaks of them with intense feeling. Of course, he was not

a Puritan, but he would sympathise with the better side of Puritanism, as he saw it in his own daughter and her husband; and when we find from the Chamberlain's accounts of Stratford that a preacher in 1614 was entertained at New Place "with a quart of sack and a quart of claret wine," it is gratuitous to assume with Dr. Brandes that Shakespeare must have been away in London at the time.

As to the details of Shakespeare's life at Stratford we have very few facts, but much has been made of them. In the attempt to throw light upon Shakespeare's character much has been made of his suing his neighbours for small sums. But such litigation, to judge by the records, seems to have been the normal method of carrying on business at Stratford; and, at any rate, as these suits were made in the way of business by Shakespeare's attorney on the spot, they cannot be held to shed much light on his personal character. Much, too, has been made of his action in regard to the proposed enclosure of the open fields at Welcombe by William Combe; but on this point the two most recent biographers take precisely opposite views. Mr. Sidney Lee says: "Having secured himself against all possible loss, Shakespeare threw his influence into Combe's scale;" on the other hand, Dr. Brandes asserts that Shakespeare "defended the rights of his fellow-citizens against the country gentry." The evidence, happily, can be put very shortly, and everyone can form his own opinion upon it. The old

system of agriculture being one of common fields in which strips were held by various owners side by side, it was necessary, in order to enclose, that one proprietor should buy out the rest. William Combe, the squire of Welcombe, had for neighbour a Mr. Mannering, steward to Lord Chancellor Ellesmere, who was lord of the manor; and as, according to Mr. Elton, the Chancellor had that year decreed that enclosure was for the common advantage, Combe had a strong case and strong backing. The corporation of Stratford resisted the proposal. The question for us is, which side did Shakespeare take? All our evidence is derived from a MS. book belonging to Shakespeare's cousin, Thomas Greene, who was clerk to the corporation. The following are the pertinent passages, in modern spelling:

"17 *Nov.*—My cousin Shakespeare coming yesterday to town, I went to see him how he did. He told me that they assured him they meant to enclose no further than to Gospel Bush. . . . and that they mean in April to survey the land, and then to give satisfaction, and not before; and he and Mr. Hall say they think there will be nothing done at all.

"23 *Dec.*—A hall [*i.e.* council meeting]. Letters written, one to Mr. Manering, another to Mr. Shakespeare, with almost all the Company's hands to either. I also writ of myself to my cousin Shakespeare the copies of all our acts, and then also a note of the inconveniences would happen by the enclosure.

"9 *Jan.*—Mr. Replyngham's [*i.e.* Combe's agent] 28 Oct., article with Mr. Shakespeare [*i.e.* deed of indemnity against loss], and then I was put in by T. Lucas.

"11 *Jan.* 1614.—Mr. Manering and his agreement for me with my cousin Shakespeare.

"*Sept.*—W. Shakespeare telling J. Greene that I was not able to bear the enclosing of Welcombe."

Now what these entries tell us is (1) that Shakespeare did not think Combe meant to press the matter, in face of the opposition of the Stratford people; (2) that in case Combe should do so, he secured himself from loss through the depreciation of the tithes, of which he had purchased the moiety of a lease ten years previously; (3) that he secured his cousin also, who had a share in the tithes. But so far there is absolutely no ground for saying either that he "threw his influence into Combe's scale," or "defended the rights of his fellow-citizens." The view we shall take of his general attitude will turn upon our interpretation of the last entry quoted above. As it stands it looks a little pointless. Why should Shakespeare tell Thomas Greene's own brother a fact he must have known better than Shakespeare did, and why should Thomas Greene make a solemn entry of Shakespeare's testimony? Here Dr. Ingleby, who facsimiled the MS., comes to our help. He points out that Greene had a trick of writing "I" for "he," sometimes correcting the slip, and sometimes not. On a previous page he had written, "I willed him to learn what *I* could, and I told him so would I," where the second *I* is an obvious slip for *he*. There can be no reasonable doubt, then, that this cryptic entry informs us of

THREE AUTOGRAPH SIGNATURES SEVERALLY WRITTEN BY SHAKESPEARE ON THE THREE SHEETS OF HIS WILL ON MARCH 25, 1616.
Reproduced from the original document now at Somerset House, London.

Shakespeare's own dislike to the enclosure, and disposes of the statement that he threw his weight into Combe's scale, though it does not justify us in saying that "he defended the rights of his fellow-citizens." He may have done so, but it is dangerous to go beyond the evidence.

The words quoted by Thomas Greene are the last recorded words of the poet. In the April of the year following he died of a fever in his house at Stratford, after signing a very elaborate will disposing of all his property. There is an interesting clause leaving memorial rings to four friends in Stratford, and three members of his old company, Burbage, Hemings, and Cundell; the last two of whom, seven years later, collected and published his plays. But the clause which has aroused most comment is an interlineation, the only reference to his wife in the document:—

"Item. I give unto my wife my second best bed with the furniture."

Unkind people have thought that Shakespeare meant to be unkind; but Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps collected instances of many similar bequests from contemporary wills, one to a wife of "the second best feather bed with a whole furniture there belonging," so that no more ought to be heard of any suggested insult. The reason why Shakespeare chose to make his daughter legatee, rather than his wife, was probably the very simple one that his wife was seven years his senior, and perhaps in poor

health ; and the reason why he interlined this special gift is probably because she asked for it specially.

In conclusion, I would ask, can we get any clear light on Shakespeare's character from the facts that have been ascertained as to his career? We have not many formal expressions of opinion by contemporaries about the man himself apart from his works, but we have one or two, and they lay stress on two characteristics, his friendliness and his sense of honour. The very first character we have of him by a contemporary speaks of his "uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty," and also of his "civil demeanour"; and the very last, that of Ben Jonson, says the same: "He was indeed honest and of an open and free nature"; and again in the lines on his portrait: "It was for *gentle* Shakespeare cut." With this agrees the character that is set down in two epigrams by John Davies of Hereford. In 1603, in an epigram on players, he made his compliments especially to Shakespeare and Burbage, as being *gentlemen* in character. It is worth quoting:

"Players, I love ye and your quality,
As ye are men—that pastime not abused ;—
W. S., R. B. And some I love for painting, poesy ;[1]
And say fell Fortune cannot be excused
That hath for better uses you refused.
Wit, courage, good shape, good parts, and all good
(As long as all these *goods* are no worse used) ;
And though the stage doth stain pure gentle blood,
Yet *generous* ye are in mind and mood."

[1] Burbage is the painter, Shakespeare the poet: thus the epigram identifies the poet and player.

And on the word *generous* in the last line he makes the note: "Roscius was said for his excellency in his quality to be only worthy to come on the stage, and for his *honesty* to be more worthy than to come thereon." To complete the portrait we may add the traits that Aubrey had from Beeston the actor: "He was a handsome, well-shapt man, very good company, and of a very ready and pleasant wit."

Honour, then, in public life, gentleness and companionableness in his private relations—these are the characteristics which men noted in Shakespeare, and they are confirmed by the facts of his career. His "honesty," to use that word in its broad Elizabethan sense, is brought out by two facts which distinguish Shakespeare from many of the contemporary dramatists. The first is that, much as commentators have laboured to find caricatures of his fellow-playwrights among his *dramatis personæ*, they have altogether failed; and while other dramatists seem to have made these attacks a prominent feature of interest in their plays, the only reference made by Shakespeare to any quarrel is the admirably just criticism of Hamlet on the competition between the men and boy actors, that those who encourage it are making the boys fight "against their own succession." The second fact is that Shakespeare chose the life of hard work and thrift instead of the life of dissipation, keeping as a lodestar before him the determination to restore the fortunes of his father and his family. For this he has been sneered at by Pope, of all

people, who, in a familiar couplet, accuses him of winging his flight "for gain." It would be as fair to say that Warren Hastings established our Indian Empire "for gain," because he also kept always before him the resolution to win back the family estate. I do not understand how any accusation can be brought against any man of genius for taking the money value of his work, unless it can be shown that, while careful of his own interests, he is indifferent to those of others. Of this there is no evidence in Shakespeare's case; but, on the contrary, Ben Jonson, who knew him well, and had a shrewd tongue, assures us that he was of "an open and free nature." I submit therefore that the facts of Shakespeare's life show him to us as a good friend and a man of honour.

ADDITIONAL NOTE.

Mr. Greenwood (*The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 318) has charged the biographers of Shakespeare with dishonesty for their interpretation of the familiar passage of *Kind-hart's Dream*, in which Chettle apologises for the rudeness of Greene in his *Groatsworth of Wit*. Mr. Henry Davey, the latest biographer, is said to be "more honest than most"; so that we may hope the tide of immorality is turning. Still, when we find "Malone, Steevens, Dyce, Collier, Halliwell, Knight," and in this last generation, "Mr. Sidney Lee, Messrs. Garnett and Gosse, Mr. Churton Collins, Mr. W. L. Courtney, and Mons. Jusserand" all agreeing that Chettle in this passage refers to Shakespeare, and only Mr. Fleay and Mr. E. K. Castle, K.C., denying it, it seems somewhat lacking in humour to assert that all those critics who on so many points differ profoundly from each other—Steevens from Malone, Dyce from Collier, to go no further—have, in this matter of Chettle, no honest grounds for their opinion, but have caught "the pestilent perversion," as Mr. Greenwood phrases it, from each other. I am not at all surprised that Mr. Greenwood takes the view he does of Chettle's reference, because I

once took the same view myself for five minutes. It is the obvious view for everyone to take when he first reads the document. But a second reading proves it to be untenable, as I hope to show. Mr. Fleay's interpretation of the passage is so obviously hasty and superficial that even Mr. Greenwood has to throw him over when he passes from saying who is not referred to, to saying who is (p. 315).

The passage in dispute runs as follows:

"About three months since, died Mr. Robert Greene, leaving many papers in sundry booksellers' hands, among others his *Groatsworth of Wit*, in which *a letter written to divers play-makers, is offensively by one or two of them taken*; and because on the dead they cannot be avenged, they wilfully forge in their conceits a living author, and after tossing it to and fro, no remedy but it must light on me. How I have all the time of my conversing in printing hindred the bitter inveighing against scholars, it hath been very well known; and how in that I dealt I can sufficiently prove. With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted, and with one of them I care not if I never be. The other whom, at that time, I did not so much spare as since I wish I had, for that, as I have moderated the heat of living writers, and might have used mine own discretion – especially in such a case, the author being dead—that I did not I am as sorry as if the original fault had been my fault, *because myself have seen his demeanour no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes; besides divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing that approves his art.* For the first whose learning I reverence, and at the perusing of Greene's book, struck out what then in conscience I thought he in some displeasure writ; or, had it been true, yet to publish it was intolerable; and him I would wish to use me no worse than I deserve."

The three friends to whom Greene addressed his epistle were Marlowe and two others, usually supposed to be Nash and Peele, or Lodge and Peele. Marlowe is "the first" of the play-makers; it is *his* acquaintance that Chettle does not wish to make, though he reverences his learning; and he admits that he had softened the passage addressed to him before he printed it. On this identification all the Shakespearian critics are agreed (with the single exception of Mr. Fleay), and Mr. Greenwood assents. The problem is, Who was the other play-maker who complained, and to whom Chettle apologises, wishing he had excised the offensive matter? The passages following the address to Marlowe (which need not be transcribed) are as follows:

"With thee I join young Juvenal, that biting satirist, that lastly

with me together writ a comedy. Sweet boy, might I advise thee, be advised, and get not many enemies with bitter words; inveigh against vain men, for thou canst do it, no man better, no man so well; thou hast a liberty to reprove all, and name none; for one being spoken to, all are offended; none being blamed, no man is injured. Stop shallow water still running, it will rage; tread on a worm, and it will turn; then blame not scholars vexed with sharp lines, if they reprove thy too much liberty of reproof."

Clearly there is nothing here to hurt the most susceptible man of letters, and nothing to account for Chettle's regret that he had not edited with more vigour. Then follows the last of the three addresses:

"And thou, no less deserving than the other two, in some things rarer, in nothing inferior; driven (as myself) to extreme shifts; a little have I to say to thee; and were it not an idolatrous oath, I would swear by sweet St. George [Peele's name was George] thou art unworthy better hap, sith thou dependest on so mean a stay."

And then follows a general passage, addressed to all three—the attack on the actors (quoted on p. 63). Now it is idle to pretend that a piece of brotherly advice to avoid relying on the players for a livelihood could have been "offensively taken" by any play-maker. Greene's tone could not be kinder. It follows that we must look elsewhere for the offended person; and we can only find him, where critics from the first have found him, in the player-play-maker abused as "Shake-scene." We must admit that Chettle should have distinguished more clearly the play makers Greene was writing *to*, from the play-maker he was writing *about*; but because he wrote muddled prose in the illogical Tudor way, we need not deprive what he wrote of all meaning. Further, this identification fits the actual expressions used.

(1) Chettle distinguishes "the facetious grace" of his offended play-maker's writing, his "art," from some "quality he professes." Now in those days there was no "quality" or profession of authorship. The scholar was a "gentleman"; his university degree was his patent. And so Greene addresses his letter "to those *gentlemen*, his quondam acquaintance, that spend their wits in making plays," and contrasts them with the players, "apes" and "buckram gentlemen," who soothe their betters "with terms of Mastership," while they prey upon them. The offended play-maker, then, has a "quality" as well as his art; and this fits the identification with Shakespeare; the actor's "quality" being a term in common use. "Will they pursue the *quality* no longer than they can sing?" asks Hamlet about the boy players (II. ii. 363).

(2) Moreover, Chettle's apology exactly fits Greene's attack. Greene had accused "Shake-scene" of thinking he could "bombast out a blank verse"; to which Chettle replies that "divers of worship had reported his facetious grace in writing." He had called him, "in his own conceit, the only Shake-scene in a country," which, whatever it exactly means, was not intended for a compliment on his acting. Chettle replies that he had seen him "excellent in the quality he professes." Finally (though perhaps I am taking here an unreal distinction), Greene had accused him of arraying himself in borrowed plumage; not only as an actor, who is necessarily "a puppet speaking from *our* mouths," an antick "garnished in *our* colours"; but as a playwright, "an upstart crow, beautified with our *feathers*," to which he has no right. To this Chettle replies, "divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty." There could be no point in quoting these testimonials from men of worship unless corresponding charges had been made; and it is against "Shake-scene," that is Shakespeare, they were made, and not against Nash, Lodge, or Peele.

III.

THE CHARACTER OF THE DRAMATIST

THE problem to which we are now to address ourselves is the question whether it is possible from an examination of Shakespeare's writings to arrive at any conclusion as to his personal character and view of life. Let us begin at the bottom with some questions as to his personal tastes and habits. And first, as to drinking. Readers have been struck with one or two passages—one in "Hamlet,"[1] one in "Othello,"[2] and one in "As You Like It"[3]—censuring the English habit of drinking to excess; passages which have no relevancy to the plot of the play, and seem spoken over the footlights directly to the audience.

> "This heavy-headed revel, east and west,
> Makes us traduced and taxed of other nations."

Now the interest of these passages is considerable taken by themselves, but they become more interesting still in the light of certain local traditions that Shakespeare's convivial habits occasionally led him into intemperance. So that what on the surface

[1] i. 4, 17. [2] ii. 3, 78. [3] ii. 3, 48.

looks merely like the voice of Shakespeare's contempt for a silly custom may be interpreted, and by some critics is interpreted, as the voice of the dramatist's self-accusation. Which is it?

Let me say, unhesitatingly, that I have no faith in the traditions. One is connected with a local crab-tree; we know how a tradition of that sort never dies; it passes from generation to generation not only of men but of trees, and is attached in each age to the most prominent memory, being probably in origin as old as Thor. The other tradition is recorded by a vicar of Stratford under the Commonwealth, and is to the effect that Shakespeare died of a fever caught of drinking too much wine at a merrymaking with Ben Jonson and Drayton.[1] But doctors tell us to-day that a fever is more easily contracted from bad water than from good wine; and Stratford was notoriously insanitary.

This question of Shakespeare's intemperate habits seems to me a point on which the evidence of his whole successful life may claim to be taken into account. No one can say that his work has suffered from any cheap vice of this sort; and I prefer therefore to hear in the passages I have referred to, the warnings of a man of common sense trying to stem the tide of a foolish fashion. That exclamation of Portia's:

"I will do anything, Nerissa, ere I be married to a sponge,"

[1] Shakespeare died April 23rd 1616; having made the first draft of his will in January, the second in March.

has to my ear a ring of real disgust; and all the criticisms in that scene we may well take to be roughly Shakespeare's own.

More interesting, perhaps, and less easy of solution, is another question of personal habit. "Did Shakespeare smoke?" or, as the phrase then was, "Did he drink tobacco?"

It will be remembered that Shakespeare is one of the very few Elizabethan dramatists who have no reference to that wonderful narcotic which came into England almost at the same moment as his own great genius. The meaning of this silence of his might be argued without end. On the one side, smokers might ask how Shakespeare could possibly introduce tobacco-smoking into romantic or classical drama, the scene of which was laid in mediæval Italy or ancient Rome; or, again, into the Falstaff comedies of Plantagenet days. Or they might urge that if the poet disliked tobacco, it would have been as possible to let the doctor in "Macbeth" compliment King James on his recent "Counterblast" to the pernicious drug, as to let him compliment his Majesty on touching for the King's evil. On the other side the anti-tobacconists might point out that Shakespeare had a good chance to introduce smoking as a gentlemanlike accomplishment in the Induction to "The Taming of the Shrew," where some fun might have been made of Christopher Sly's attempt to play the gentleman in that particular; but he abstains, and they might add that Shake-

speare was probably so sickened of tobacco smoke by the custom of smoking on the stage, that he was little likely to practise it on his own account. The question cannot be determined.

On a higher plane we may ask, had Shakespeare a taste for music? One of the few points on which all the biographers are agreed is that the dramatist was a passionate lover of this art; and they may be right. In an age when music formed part of a liberal education, it is not improbable that he shared in the general appreciation; though his technical knowledge is occasionally at fault. But if we look at the references to music in the plays, we find that they are so much the outcome of the temperament of the *dramatis personæ*, or of the needs of the dramatic situation, that they must be used with caution as evidence of the dramatist's own taste. The famous speech with which "Twelfth Night" opens is in character with the love-sick, sentimental Duke; the no less famous speech of Lorenzo in the last act of "The Merchant of Venice" suits his high-pitched romantic nature, and is moreover in harmony with a scene

> "Where music and moonlight and feeling
> Are one."

The piece of evidence that would incline us to give Shakespeare the benefit of any doubt is the 8th Sonnet, and again the 128th, addressed to a lady playing on the virginals.

From art let us go to politics. Here we can have little doubt as to Shakespeare's general view. An Elizabethan of genius who had gone through the stress of the Armada year when he was twenty-four years old could not but have felt the new thrill of national life and the new sense of England's greatness, and again and again in his plays Shakespeare says a great word that has still power to stir our blood :

> " O England, model to thy inward greatness,
> Like little body with a mighty heart ! "

or,

> " This England never did nor never shall
> Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror
> But when it first did help to wound itself,"

or, best of all, John of Gaunt's touching lament in " Richard II." But Shakespeare has been accused of supporting the Stuart ideas of monarchy, especially by his references to the sanctity of kingship. An actor attached to the Lord Chamberlain's company, which with James's accession became the King's, was courtier enough to introduce a respectful compliment now and again to his prince ; but those who charge Shakespeare with abetting the Stuart notions of divine right must surely forget the lessons on the nature of true kingship which are embalmed in the trilogy of " Richard II.," " Henry IV.," and " Henry V." Again it is objected against Shakespeare that he disliked crowds. But who likes them ? Mankind does not show well in crowds,

even at political meetings in the twentieth century. And Shakespeare lived before the persons and manners of the commonalty had been polished by school-boards. Certainly Shakespeare made his crowds foolish enough, always at the mercy of demagogues; and he made them cruel enough; but take his mechanicals, not in crowds, but singly, and he is far from denying them human virtues. The Citizens in "Coriolanus" have much the best of the argument with Menenius Agrippa, when he is expounding the fable of the belly and its members; they have much the best of the argument with Coriolanus himself when he is suing for the consulship. And can one say that Shakespeare lacked appreciation of Bottom and Peter Quince and the rest of that admirable dramatic troupe?

But leaving these particular tastes and opinions, let us ask whether we can gain any light from the plays on Shakespeare's personal character. How may we set about the investigation? A very brilliant attempt was made in a series of papers contributed a few years ago by Mr. Frank Harris to the *Saturday Review*, and since collected, to deduce the dramatist's own disposition from a certain predominant type alleged to be found in the plays. Mr. Harris contended that if Shakespeare's many creations were placed side by side, it would be observed that one special type came over and over again, and this type, which the poet found most interesting and has therefore made the most perfect,

must, he argues, have been drawn from himself. Just as Rembrandt painted his own portrait at all the critical periods of his life, so, it is alleged, did Shakespeare. He painted it first as a youth given over to love's dominion, in Romeo; a little later, as a melancholy onlooker at life's pageant, in Jaques; then in middle age, as an "æsthete-philosopher" of kindliest nature in Hamlet and Macbeth; after that as the Duke, incapable of severity, in "Measure for Measure"; and finally, idealised out of all likeness to humanity, in the master-magician Duke Prospero. As a result of an examination of these several portraits Mr. Harris pronounces Shakespeare to have been, in personal disposition, of a contemplative, philosophical nature, of great intellectual fairness and great kindness of heart; but, on the other hand, incapable of severity and almost of action, of a feminine, sensual temperament, melancholy, soft-fibred, neuropathic. It is a portrait which has been much praised; and as a *tour de force* it would be difficult to praise it too highly; but the point of interest to us is not whether it is a clever picture, but whether it is a true likeness. I do not think much subtlety will be required to show that it is not. We must first ask what it is, which all these characters have in common, that makes our critic so sure that they are all portraits of the same person. The answer is that they are all persons given to reflection, to self-revelation, to pouring out their dissatisfaction with life, and unpacking their hearts

in words, and moreover all persons who do so in incomparable lyric poetry, so that we are sure the voice must be the authentic voice of Shakespeare.

It will be worth while to look for a moment at one or two of these pictures which are thus presented to us as the portraits of the artist himself. On Romeo we need not stay, he is young and a lover, and Shakespeare had undoubtedly been both ; moreover Romeo has imagination, like Shakespeare ; but when we have added that he was brave and somewhat impulsive, we have noted all his salient characteristics ; for " Romeo and Juliet " is not in its chief interest a play of character ; the tragic element does not come out of the characters of either hero or heroine ; they are but the " most precious among many precious things " which have to be made a sacrifice of, in order that the bloody feud between the Montagues and Capulets may be healed. But when from Romeo we pass to " the melancholy " Jaques, we may fairly protest against the identification of Shakespeare with him and his view of life. Jaques is a sentimental egotist, and a rhetorical rhapsodiser, who enjoys and parades a philosophic melancholy. We know that Shakespeare did not mean us to admire Jaques's melancholy, because he makes all the healthy-minded people in the play, one after another, laugh at it. And what do the philosophical reflections amount to ? There is the satirical speech upon society suggested by the wounded deer, and the Duke tells Jaques frankly that satire is an

unhealthy form of employment; and there is the speech, which every child learns, about the seven ages of man, a beautifully written commonplace, but not in Shakespeare's vein. Never does Shakespeare when he speaks in his own person in the Sonnets, and never does he (as I believe) through the lips of the characters with whom he sympathises, pity or despise human life as such; never does he speak of it as merely a stage play; there are plenty of things in life which disgust and weary him; but he does not say "All the world's a stage." Jaques says that. If Shakespeare, as one tradition asserts, himself played the part of Adam, he would enter on Orlando's shoulders after the delivery of this speech, no doubt amid the roar of the theatre which had greeted it, and not, I think, without a smile at such uncritical applause. The next portrait is Hamlet, and in finding in Hamlet's mouth hints of the poet's own view of things, our critic is only following a commonly received and justifiable opinion. The Sonnets afford not a few parallels. But the very fact that Hamlet is made the hero of a tragedy implies that the dramatist is viewing his character with not entirely approving eyes. In no tragedy after "Romeo and Juliet" is the hero merely the victim of circumstances, there is always something in his own character which involves him in catastrophe, and without going into detail it is sufficiently clear that the root of trouble in Hamlet's case is just this brooding melancholy

which renders him incapable of action except upon sudden impulse. I would urge, therefore, that if we find Shakespeare holding up one kind of reflective melancholy to ridicule in "As You Like It," and showing the fatal consequences of another kind in "Hamlet," the most we could infer would be that he felt in himself the temptation to that infirmity. But all that we know of his outward life gives the opposite impression. At this point, then, I shall take leave to consider that the method of discovering Shakespeare's character by identifying him with this and that of his *dramatis personæ* has broken down, without going on to discuss his likeness to Macbeth or the Duke in "Measure for Measure," about whom I wish to say a word presently in another connection, or to Prospero, who has no very clearly defined characteristic but that of benignity.

If we are to reach any results, we must frame our interrogation in a somewhat different form, and ask what light we can get from the plays not directly upon Shakespeare's character, but on his view of life, and his opinions on men and things. And one answer at once suggests itself from what has been already said. We can observe the sentiments put into the mouths of those characters with whom we are plainly meant to sympathise, and contrast them with those that are put into the mouths of other characters with whom we are meant not to sympathise. This is a consideration

sufficiently obvious, but it is too often neglected, although it is of the utmost importance to the interpretation of the dramas. There are many little books made to sell for presents which collect what are called the beauties of Shakespeare; but very rarely in such books do we find any discrimination as to the character of the person who makes the speech that is scheduled as a beauty. I have already commented on Jaques's opinion that "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." Take for another example the saying of Hamlet which is sometimes a little thoughtlessly quoted:

> "There's a divinity doth shape our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will."

Could any one quote this as the opinion of Shakespeare himself who remembered that it is Hamlet who says it, by way of excuse for his own malady of alternate *laissez-faire* and sudden impulse? On the other hand, the sentiments that have passed, and rightly passed, into the spiritual currency of the English people will always be found put into the mouth of characters with whom, in the action, the poet is in sympathy; and if we collect a few of these, such as the passage beginning "Sweet are the uses of adversity," or

> "There is some soul of goodness in things evil
> Would men observingly distil it out,"

or

> "If our virtues
> Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
> As if we had them not,"

they suggest to us an outlook upon the world bright, hopeful, and stirring; not that of a dreamy, melancholy, sentimental neuropath; they present a view which is consistent with the picture we obtain from the story of Shakespeare's life, of a man who worked hard in his calling, and of whom his professional comrades could speak with respect and affection: "I loved the man, and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature."

But we can get back to something in the dramas more fundamental and more self-revealing than any isolated sentiments. We can observe the way in which Shakespeare viewed his world of men as a whole; what interested him in it; the general idea he had formed of human nature and its possibilities; his opinion of where human success lay and what constituted failure. We can put the question, what sort of place did the world seem to Shakespeare to be? It is quite clear that there was a great deal in the world that filled him with disgust; the Sonnets tell us that:—"Tired of all these, from these would I be gone"; but they tell us also how much there was in the world that he admired and loved; and the more serious plays show us unmistakably that Shakespeare held it to be man's business not to yield to the evil, but to fight it with wisdom and endurance. One point that most strikes us is that Shakespeare looked upon the world as a moral order. Men and women, as Shakespeare saw and drew them, are

always creatures exercising freedom of will. In the writings of some other dramatists, the persons of their dramas are sometimes represented as the sport of the higher powers; but in the world that Shakespeare's art mirrors for us, there is no such thing as a man driven upon evil courses by fate; the spring of each man's action is seen to lie in his own desires; he may do or leave undone. He may apparently be helped or hindered by principalities and powers of worlds invisible; but he cannot be moved by them to action against his will. The "weird sisters" who appear to Macbeth cannot bear the blame of his crime, or share it, because they appeared also to his fellow-captain Banquo, who shook off their suggestion; and Hamlet's ghost, who visits his son, is powerless to touch the springs of his will. And Shakespeare's world is a moral world in the further sense that its men and women are people with consciences; who recognise the rightness or wrongness of actions, and the law of duty. The only one of Shakespeare's writings which takes a merely sensual view of human nature is the poem of "Venus and Adonis"; which is extraordinarily interesting, from our present point of view, as the first visible effect upon Shakespeare's mind of the Renaissance culture with which he came in contact in London, a culture partly euphuistic, partly classical, and wholly unmoral. The effect unmistakably, for the time, was a complete surrender to the doctrine of what a later age has known as that of "art for

art's sake"; which means that any passion of which human nature is capable is suitable for representation, if only it is "as lively painted as the deed was done"; with a preference in practice for the lower nature over the higher. Happily Shakespeare found a valuable corrective to this view of art in his work as a dramatist; and the second poem he produced, a year after the first, though equally upon a classical theme, was on a less animal plane of interest, and admitted such human conceptions as honour and virtue. And ever after it was this higher nature of men that remained to Shakespeare the point of chief interest. We see this most plainly in the tragedies. The purpose and meaning of Shakespeare's tragic art has been much discussed of late, and it is not a question on which I wish to dogmatise; but at least this seems true to say, that while it magnifies the dignity and interest of human action by giving it the most painstaking study, it yet aims at showing how the greatest among men might be brought to ruin, if only the circumstances of life were so contrived as to give opportunity and scope to their errors and defects. In his tragedies Shakespeare contrives for his heroes just the circumstances which shall press upon their weak places, and test them to the uttermost. The tragedy of Hamlet, or Brutus, or Macbeth, or Othello, or Antony, if it is not the tragedy of a noble and a spiritual nature, is nothing at all. There is no reason

why the play should have been written. And if we are justified in drawing conclusions as to the character of a man from a survey of his interests, the light that the Shakespearian tragedies throw back upon the character of their writer is singularly bright and clear. Take, for example, the tragedy of Hamlet. A philosophical young prince, of a melancholy habit, finds an obligation laid upon him to avenge his father's murder. In any world, except the particular world that the poet has contrived for him, he might have lived a quiet life among his books; doing little active good perhaps, either speculatively or practically; but certainly doing no harm. But he has a task set him by an authority to which he cannot but own allegiance, that of purging the realm of a monster; and the dramatist has shown us in a crucial instance the tragedy of a brooding intellect divorced from will, of the habit of thinking about duties until we think them away. Or take Brutus in "Julius Cæsar." Here again there is question of a student called to action. But the defect of Brutus is not in will, but in practical judgment. In the sacred name of liberty Brutus assassinates the real saviour of society, and lets loose upon his country the horrors of civil war. In moral purpose his stature is heroic; he means the best; and yet so far is this from atoning for his want of insight into men's real dispositions and the needs of the time, that at point after point his moral prestige but renders his want of wisdom the more fatal. Here then are two pictures of

great and lovable men, with weaknesses of character such as in everyday life we are perfectly familiar with, and readily excuse; and Shakespeare teaches us that these defects need only their fit occasion and full development, to overwhelm in ruin the nature that owns them and all who are drawn within the circle of their influence. I venture to think, then, that we are justified in drawing a very definite conclusion as to the disposition of the man who penned these two plays. They show us his high esteem for nobility of character—Hamlet and Brutus are men of a high nobility whom we are taught to love—and they show us also his strong sense of the claim the world has upon the highest powers of the men who are born into it.

But from our present point of view, the tragedy of "Macbeth" is an even better example of Shakespeare's tragic stage, because it directly repudiates an accusation that might perhaps be made against the dramatist, of taking a merely æsthetic view of human life; contemplating it from some lofty tower of his palace of art. For in Macbeth we have a man in whom this æsthetic appreciation of human life is developed to an extraordinary degree. Macbeth is a poet. He has a fine and keen and true appreciation of all the situations in which he finds himself, except from the one point of view which under his temptations would have been worth all the rest to him, and which his unimaginative fellow Banquo has: the point of view from which

actions are judged as simply right or wrong. As we read the soliloquy in which he debates the suggested murder of Duncan, we notice that the considerations which make him hesitate are, in the main, æsthetic considerations; that it is unbecoming in a man's kinsman, or host or subject, to kill him; there is no question of any sin in murder. And of every succeeding event in his life he is, from the æsthetic point of view, equally appreciative; just as he enjoys popularity and on that score is almost willing to refrain from murder, so he understands that the old age to which a usurper can look forward cannot be surrounded "with honour, love, obedience, troops of friends"; and when, just before the last, he learns his wife's death, he speaks with the same just appraisement the epitaph of the life they have lived together since their great sin, the epitaph of the non-moral life, seeing in it a mere succession of days with no goal but death, and therefore no real meaning.

> "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
> To the last syllable of recorded time;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle,
> Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more; it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing."

Could there be a better commentary on the dramatist's own view of life, than this passionate

judgment of the futility of the life Macbeth had elected to live?

Let us turn for a moment to the comedies, and see if we can glean any light from them upon what Shakespeare liked or disliked in men and women. It seems to me not a little significant that two at least of the defective types of character which he handles in the tragedies, he handles over again in the comedies, only in the comedy he treats them as they are found not in heroic natures, but in ordinary specimens of humanity, and in circumstances that lead to a much milder form of catastrophe. I have already suggested a comparison between Jaques and Hamlet, each of whom makes the unwarrantable claim to moralise upon life from the outside without taking part in it. In the nobler nature the claim is handled tragically, in the shallower it is rebuked by Rosalind's fine wit. But there is also some sort of a parallel with Marcus Brutus. The self-satisfaction of Malvolio in "Twelfth Night," looked at by itself, is very much the same quality as the self-satisfaction of Brutus: the lives of both pass in a dream, neither is in touch with the real world; and—it is a curious point—both are snared to their ruin by the same trick of a forged letter so contrived as to fall in with their dreams. But the interest of the comedies, for our present investigation, lies in this, that they present us not only with criticism, but with a positive ideal; and this Shakespeare gives us in his women. The creator of Portia, and Rosalind,

and Beatrice, had, we are convinced, a very clear ideal in his own mind of the sort of life that men and women should pursue, a life of sound sense as opposed to folly, and goodness as opposed to vice. There is one other point I should like to draw attention to in Shakespeare's comedies because I think it is characteristic of the man; of his justice and tolerance. While he keeps his ideal perfectly clear, and we are never, I believe, for a moment in doubt as to his own judgment upon his characters, he is not afraid of allowing traits of real goodness to persons who on other accounts are exposed to our censure. Take Sir Toby for example. There is no denying that he is a terrible toper, and Shakespeare does not make us in love with his drunkenness; but Shakespeare does let us see that in the drunkard the gentleman is not quite extinct. It will be remembered that the disguised Viola, being mistaken for her brother Sebastian, is charged by Antonio with denying her benefactor his own purse. This so horrifies Sir Toby that he draws his friends aside, and will have nothing more to do with the youth. "A very dishonest, paltry boy," he calls him. It is this perfectly firm but perfectly equitable and all-round judgment on points of character that is so wonderful in the plays, and it is a mere caricature to assert, as some critics have asserted, that Shakespeare was merely easy-going on points of morals.

Indeed, in one famous case, it might be better pleaded that he was too severe a moralist. I

imagine everyone feels a shock when at the end of "Henry IV." he comes upon the new king's sermon to his old boon-companion Falstaff. "I know thee not, old man; fall to thy prayers." It may have been, as has been eloquently maintained,[1] that Shakespeare had made Prince Hal, from the first, a bit of a prig, and knew he would preach when the chance came. Nevertheless Falstaff's misfortune may also be due to the fact that he comes into a historical play instead of a pure comedy. In "The Merry Wives of Windsor," Falstaff, notwithstanding his enormities—and Shakespeare needs all the excuse of a Royal Command for the way he has degraded him—meets no further punishment than the jeers of his would-be victims; it is sufficient in comedy that faults should be judged by laughter. Nobody wants Sir Toby put on the black list as a tippler, or Autolycus sent to gaol for filching linen from the hedges. But when the world of comedy touches the real world, as in "Henry IV." and "Henry V.," social offences have to meet social punishment, and so we have not only Falstaff exiled from court and dying of a broken heart, but poor Nym and Bardolph hanged for stealing in the wars.

The question of Shakespeare's religion is too large and difficult to be discussed at the end of an essay,[2]

[1] By Mr. A. C. Bradley, author of "Shakespearean Tragedy," my tutor at college, *quem honoris causa nomino.*

[2] I have done my best to settle the question as between Papist and Protestant in the *Stratford Head Shakespeare*, vol. x.

but I should like to say a word about his supposed hatred and abuse of Puritans. This is one of the fixed ideas of the very meritorious life of Shakespeare by Dr. Brandes. "From 'Twelfth Night' onwards," he says, "an unremitting war against Puritanism, conceived as hypocrisy, is carried on through 'Hamlet,' through the revised version of 'All's Well that Ends Well,' and through 'Measure for Measure,' in which his wrath rises to a tempestuous pitch" (p. 240). We turn to "Twelfth Night" and find this: Maria says of Malvolio—"Marry, sir, sometimes he is a kind of Puritan"; to which Sir Andrew replies, "O, if I thought that, I'd beat him like a dog."

"*Sir Toby.* What, for being a Puritan! thy exquisite reason, good knight?

"*Sir Andrew.* I have no exquisite reason for't, but I have reason good enough.

"*Maria.* The devil a Puritan that he is, or anything constantly but a time-pleaser."

Now, surely, that passage might have been introduced in defence of Puritans rather than in scorn of them. Sir Andrew takes the tone of courtier-like contempt, and Sir Toby asks him to explain; and he cannot. Then Maria retracts the name, and says Malvolio can't be a Puritan because he isn't conscientious. The reference in "Hamlet" turns out to be Hamlet's saying "A great man's memory may outlive half his life, but by'r lady he must build

churches then," but the oath *by'r lady* is proof enough that no one in the audience would take a reference to the Puritans. In "All's Well," that most disagreeable of all Shakespeare's plays, I believe one of the earliest he wrote, which even his revision in the Hamlet period could not cure, the Clown indeed makes some unsavoury jests, but he blunts their edge by dividing them equally between Papist and Puritan; and I should say that to find in "Measure for Measure" an attack on Puritanism is entirely to misconceive that play. The heroine of the play is Isabella, and if Isabella is not a Puritan after Milton's strong type, what is she? Dr. Brandes does not indeed assert that Shakespeare wrote the play in the interest of Pompey and Mistress Overdone; but that he wrote it in the interest of King James, who was already coming to blows with Puritanism, wishing to defend his indifference to immorality. When questions are raised as to the general ideas underlying a play, the appeal must be to the general impression it makes on the indifferent spectator; but apart from that, as conclusive against Dr. Brandes' view, it seems sufficient to point to the scene in the first act where the Duke confesses to Friar Thomas that he had been too remiss, and again to such a speech as this at the end of the play:

> "My business in this state
> Made me a looker-on here in Vienna,
> Where I have seen corruption boil and bubble
> Till it o'errun the stew."

If Shakespeare had strong opinions about the Hamlets of the world not bestirring themselves to do their duty in it, we may guess that his view extended to reigning princes, though as to them he had to express himself with some reserve.

In one word then, if I am asked how we can get behind Shakespeare's writing to the man himself, I should say, we must ask ourselves what is the impression left on our mind after a careful reading of any play; because that will be Shakespeare's mind speaking to ours. And I cannot think the general impression we thus gather from the great volume of the poet's work is at all a vague one.

He could paint passion, whether in a Cleopatra or a Lear, as no other dramatist has painted it, but he does not impress us as himself passionate by nature. Rather, we are conscious all through the plays of the allied graces of gentleness and manliness. There is in them a clear outlook upon life, both on its good and its evil; a strong sense that, however the evil came about (and there were times when it seemed overwhelming), yet that the good must fight it; and at the same time there is a gentleness that is prepared to acknowledge good in unexpected places, and is ready to forgive.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
Los Angeles
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

JUN 5 1953
APR 15 1960
REC'D LD-URL
MAY 22 1968

Form L9-25m-9,'47(A5618)444

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT
LOS ANGELES
LIBRARY

(S)
IAL LIBRARY FACILITY
191 9
2939 B39W
CALL NUMBER
SER VOL PT COP
AUTHOR
THE LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LOS ANGELES
University Research Library
FORM L 30202